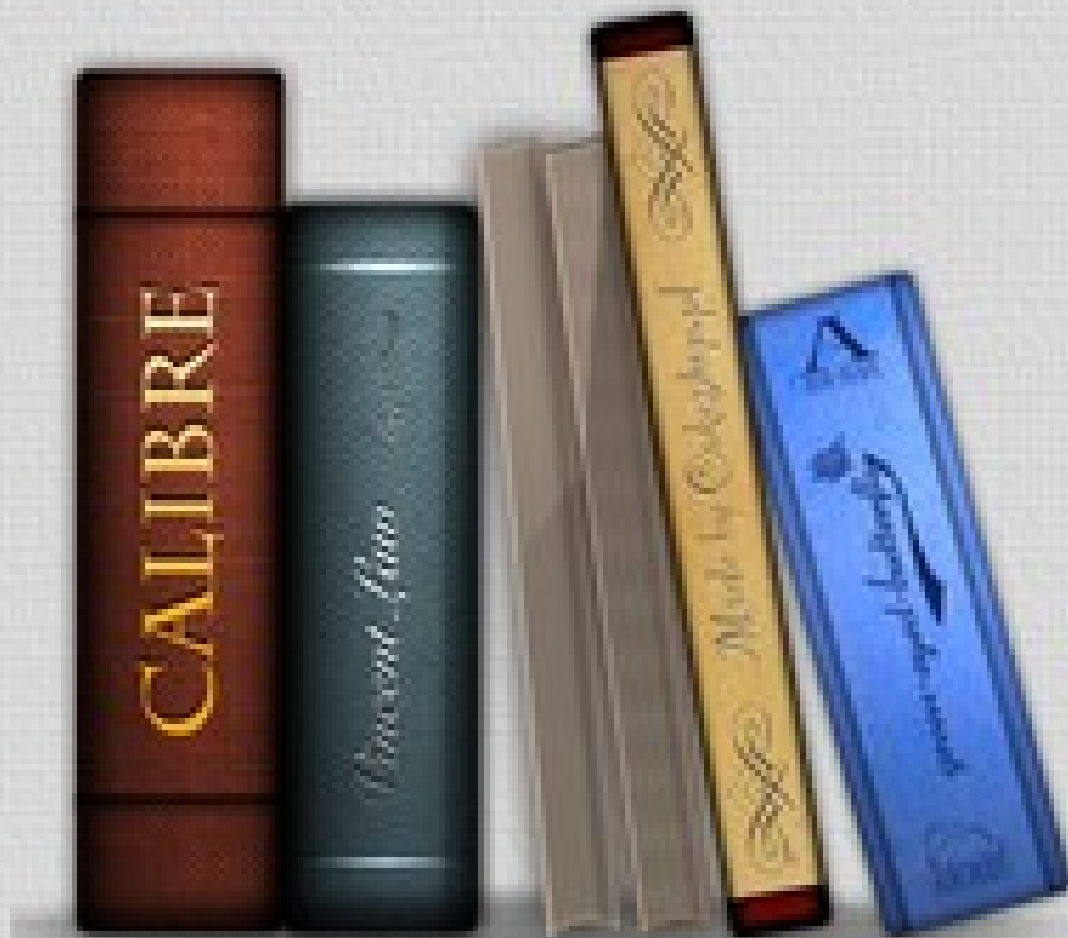


DGuzik 49 Ephesians

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(Eph 1:1)

Salutation

From Paul,¹ an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints [in Ephesus],² the faithful³ in Christ Jesus.

(Guzik)

Eph 1:1-23

Ephesians 1 - GOD'S ULTIMATE PLAN

A. Introduction to Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

1. The character and themes of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

a. Paul's letter to the Ephesians is different compared to many of the other New Testament letters he wrote. Like Romans, Ephesians was not written so much to address problems in a particular church; more so, it was written to explain some of the great themes and doctrines of Christianity.

i. The elevated themes of Ephesians make it highly praised and prized by commentators. Ephesians has been called "the Queen of the Epistles," "the quintessence of Paulinism," "the divinest composition of man" and even "the Waterloo of commentators." Some say that Ephesians reads "like a commentary on the Pauline letters" and probably it has been best termed "the crown of Paulinism." (Bruce)

ii. "It sums up in large measure the leading themes of the Pauline writings . . . But it does more than that; it carries the thought of the earlier letters forward to a new stage." (Bruce)

iii. "Among the Epistles bearing the name of St. Paul there is none greater than this, nor any with a character more

entirely its own . . . There is a peculiar and sustained loftiness in its teaching which has deeply impressed the greatest minds and has earned for it the title of the 'Epistle of the Ascension.'" (Salmond)

iv. "If Romans is the purest expression of the gospel (as Luther said), then Ephesians is the most sublime and majestic expression of the gospel." (Lloyd-Jones) Lloyd-Jones also said of Ephesians: "It is difficult to speak of it in a controlled manner because of its greatness and because of its sublimity."

v. "The Epistle to the Ephesians is a complete Body of Divinity. In the first chapter you have the doctrines of the gospel; in the next, you have the experience of the Christians; and before the Epistle is finished, you have the precepts of the Christian faith. Whosoever would see Christianity in one treatise, let him 'read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest' the Epistle to the Ephesians." (Spurgeon)

vi. Moule quotes Chrysostom: "This Epistle is full to the brim of thoughts and doctrines sublime and momentous.

For the things which scarcely anywhere else he utters, here he makes manifest."

b. If the Letter to the Romans focuses more on God's work in the individual Christian, Ephesians includes the great themes of God's work in the church, the community of believers.

i. Karl Marx wrote about a new man and a new society, but he saw man and society both in almost purely economic terms, and offered only economic answers. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul also saw the new man and a new society, but he saw it all accomplished by the work of Jesus.

c. Ephesians has many similarities with Paul's letter to the Colossians. Since Paul wrote both of them from his Roman imprisonment, his mind may have been working on the same themes when he wrote each letter.

i. "He wrote to the Colossians to meet a particular situation and danger in the church at Colossae. Then with his

mind still working over the theme of the greatness and glory of Christ, but moving on to consider the place of the Church in the purpose of God, he wrote Ephesians, this time without the limitation of any polemical aims.”

(Foulkes)

ii. In looking at the great, majestic themes of Ephesians, it is important remember that Paul wrote this letter *from prison!*

d. Paul wrote in 1Co_2:9-10 : *But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.*

For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. Ephesians is the fulfillment of this. It reveals the things God has prepared for those who love Him.

2. (Eph_1:1-2) Paul’s greeting to the Ephesians.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

a. **Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ:** The opening of the letter is brief, without the more detailed greetings from Paul often found in his other letters.

b. **To the saints who are in Ephesus:** In a few ancient manuscripts there is a blank space instead of the words **in Ephesus**. Based partly on this, some believe that this letter was actually a circular letter written not to any one congregation, but meant to be passed on to many different congregations in different cities.

i. There is little doubt this letter was intended for Ephesus, and Ephesus was an important city to Paul. “Here was his well-known Ephesus. Here for the space of three complete years - a unique length of stationary work for him -

he had lived and laboured, not as the apostolic missionary only but as the apostolic pastor. Here he had taken that critical and momentous step, the ‘separation’ of the disciples from the Synagogue to a distinct place of teaching

and no doubt of worship, 'the school of one Tyrannus,' the lecture-hall, we may suppose, of a friendly professor in what we may call the Ephesian University. Here he had laboured, watched, and wept, for both the community and individuals." (Moule)

ii. At the same time, we can gather that the letter was also intended in a more general sense - to circulate among Christians as a great statement of God's eternal plan, worked out in the church and in individual Christian lives. If there is a blank space in a manuscript where others read **in Ephesus**, it is certainly because we are to put *our city* in that blank space.

c. **Grace to you and peace from God our Father:** This greeting is typical of Paul. The apostle knew the essential place of **grace** and **peace** from God in the life of the believer, and He knew that receiving God's grace comes *before* a walk in peace with Him.

B. The work of the Triune God on behalf of the believer.

In ancient Greek (the language Paul originally wrote in), Eph_1:3 through 1:14 form one long sentence. As an opera has an overture, setting the tone for all the melodies that will follow, so Eph_1:3-14 sets the tone for the rest of Ephesians.

1. (Eph_1:3-6) The work of God the *Father*.

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

a. **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:** Paul called for a blessing upon the Father (in the sense of recognizing His glory and honor and goodness), because the Father has *already* blessed the believer with

every spiritual blessing (**who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing**).

i. Moule wrote that the idea behind **blessed** is, “Praised with worshipping love.”

b. **Who has blessed us**: This blessing is ours. God’s resources are there for us always. This speaks of an attitude of certainty and assurance.

i. “We are not sitting here, and groaning, and crying, and fretting, and worrying, and questioning our own salvation. He has blessed us; and therefore we will bless him. If you think little of what God has done for you, you will do very little for him; but if you have a great notion of his great mercy to you, you will be greatly grateful to you gracious God.” (Spurgeon)

ii. The “**us**” includes both Jews and Gentiles in the church at Ephesus and beyond. It was important to point out that these blessings are for both Jewish and Gentile believers. First century Jews had a strong sense of being blessed, called and predestined - Paul shows that these things are now given to Christians, be they Jew or Gentile.

c. **With every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ**: This describes both the *kind* of blessings and the *location* of those blessings. These are **spiritual** blessings, which are far better than material blessings. These blessings are ours **in the heavenly places in Christ**, they are higher, better, and more secure than earthly blessings.

i. “Our thanks are due to God for all temporal blessings; they are more than we deserve. But our thanks ought to go to God in thunders of hallelujahs for spiritual blessings. A new heart is better than a new coat. To feed on Christ is better than to have the best earthly food. To be an heir of God is better than being the heir of the greatest nobleman. To have God for our portion is blessed, infinitely more blessed than to own broad acres of land. God

hath blessed us with spiritual blessings. These are the rarest, the richest, the most enduring of all blessings; they are priceless in value.” (Spurgeon)

ii. If we have no appreciation for spiritual blessing, then we live at the level of *animals*. Animals live only to eat, sleep, entertain themselves, and to reproduce. We are made in the image of God and He has something much higher for us, yet many choose to live at the level of *animals*. God wants us know **every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ**.

iii. We also note that this includes **every spiritual blessing**.

- This means that *every blessing we receive, we receive in Christ*.

- This means that God wants to bless us with *every blessing available to us*.

d. **Just as He chose us in Him**: Our possession of **every spiritual blessing** is as certain as our being chosen by Him, and chosen **before the foundation of the world**.

i. We dare not diminish what Paul writes here. Believers are chosen by God, and they are chosen before they *have done* anything or *have been* anything for God. “It is the infinite Free-Will of God, (even more sacred than the free-will of man;) a purpose and a plan older than the oceans and the skies.” (Moule) The great light of this truth casts some shadows - namely, in trying to reconcile human responsibility with divine sovereignty. But the purpose of light is not to cast shadows but to guide our steps. The light of God’s selection gives us assurance to the permanence of His plan and His love towards us.

ii. The reasons for God’s choosing are not capricious, nor are they random. Though they are past our finding out, we know that they are altogether wise and good, but the reasons are all in Him, not in us. His choosing is *according to the good pleasure of His will* (Eph_1:5).

iii. We are chosen **in Him**. “For if we are chosen in Christ, it is outside ourselves. It is not from the sight of our deserving, but because our heavenly Father has engrafted us, through the blessing of adoption, into the Body of Christ. In short, the name of Christ excludes all merit, and everything which men have of themselves.” (Calvin)

e. **That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love**: We are chosen not only for salvation, but also for *holiness*. Any understanding of God’s sovereign choosing that diminishes our personal responsibility for personal holiness and sanctification falls far short of the whole counsel of God.

i. “The words [**holy and without blame**] are a metaphor taken from the *perfect* and *immaculate* sacrifices which the law required the people to bring to the altar of God.” (Clarke)

ii. We cannot forget the words **in love**. Holiness and blamelessness are nothing without love. “But as *love* is the *fulfilling of the law*, and *love* the *fountain* whence their salvation flowed, therefore *love* must fill their hearts towards God and each other.” (Clarke)

f. **Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself**: This is the Father’s destiny for His chosen - that they would enjoy **adoption as sons**. God’s unfolding plan for us not only includes salvation and personal transformation, but also a warm, confident relationship with the Father.

i. In Roman law, “When the adoption was complete it was complete indeed. The person who had been adopted had all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family and completely lost all rights in his old family. In the eyes of the law he was a new person. So new was he that even all debts and obligations connected with his previous family were abolished as if they had never existed.” (Barclay)

ii. Gaebelin takes the thought even further: “Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are not adopted into the family of God; they are born into the family. The Greek has only one word ‘Sonplace.’ We are placed into the position of

Sons.”

iii. This high position in the family of God gives us something in Jesus that Adam never had. “When people ask us

the speculative question why God went ahead with the creation when he knew that it would be followed by the fall, one answer we can tentatively give is that he destined us for a higher dignity than even creation would bestow on us.” (Stott)

g. To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved: The relational aspect is emphasized again as Paul describes the status of **accepted** (*charito*, “highly favored” or “full of grace” as in Luk_1:28) that is granted to every believer because of God’s grace.

i. Jesus was completely accepted by the Father. All His character, all His words, all His work was acceptable to God the Father. And now we are **accepted in the Beloved**.

ii. Paul realized this plan gave glory to the **grace** of God. “By the giving of the LAW, God’s *justice* and *holiness* were rendered most glorious; by the giving of the GOSPEL, his *grace* and *mercy* are made equally glorious.” (Clarke) God’s plan in the gospel is often rejected because it glorifies God and His grace, not the effort or achievement of man.

iii. “So that He may receive from His adoring creatures the ‘praise’ due to His ‘glory,’ His own manifested CHARACTER, manifested in this form of entrancing beauty, His ‘grace.’” (Moule)

iv. Bruce on the idea of being **accepted** by God on the standing of grace: “God’s grace has extended to his people and enfolded them: he has ‘be-graced’ them, says Paul (using a verb derived from the Greek word for ‘grace’).”

v. Chrysostom, speaking of the work by which God makes us **accepted in the Beloved**: “It is as if one were to take a leper and change him into a lovely youth.”

2. (Eph_1:7-8) The work of God the *Son*.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, a. **In Him we have redemption through His blood:** The **Him** is the *Beloved* of Eph_1:6. **In Him** we have redemption and nowhere else. There is no possible redemption outside of Jesus and His redeeming **blood**.

i. **Redemption** always implies a price being paid for the freedom that is purchased. It uses the ancient Greek word *lootruo*, which means, “to liberate on the receipt of a ransom.” (Gaebelein) Here the price is **His blood**, showing that the blessing from the Father and the Son comes not only from a divine decree, but it also comes according to His righteousness and holiness. He cannot bless in opposition to His righteousness and holiness.

ii. Jesus does not redeem us by His sinless life or His moral example, but only by His death in our place - by **His blood**. “Observe, it is not redemption through his power, it is *through his blood*. It is not redemption through his love, it is through his blood.” (Spurgeon) iii. We should not take a superstitious or mystical view of “the blood.” It was not Jesus’ physical blood that saved anyone, but His real and total payment for the sins of man in His whole person on the cross. This is what the New

Testament means when it talks about “the **blood**.”

b. **According to the riches of His grace:** The redemption and forgiveness given to us comes according to the measure of the **riches of His grace**. It is not a “small” redemption or forgiveness won by Jesus on the cross. It is immense.

c. **Which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence:** Many think it is unwise of God to lavish such redemption and forgiveness on guilty sinners. But it is **in all wisdom and prudence** that He has given this to us.

3. (Eph_1:9-12) The mystery of His will.

Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in

the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

a. Having made known to us the mystery of His will:

Part of what belongs to us under the *riches of His grace* is the knowledge of **the mystery of His will**, God's great plan and purpose which was once hidden but is now revealed to us in Jesus. Through the Apostle Paul, God calls us to consider the greatness of God's great plan for the ages and our place in that plan.

i. "In the New Testament sense a mystery is something which is hidden to the heathen but clear to the Christian."

(Barclay)

ii. The idea behind the word **dispensation** also reflects a plan or a strategy. "The plan which the master of a family, or his steward, has established for the management of the family . . . it signifies, also, a plan for the management of any sort of business." (Clarke)

b. That . . . He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him: God's ultimate plan is to bring together - to ultimately resolve - all things in Christ, either through Jesus as a Savior or Jesus as a Judge; this will happen in the **fullness of the times**.

i. The word for **gather together** has the idea of "to unite" or "to sum up." It was used for the process of adding up a column of figures and putting the sum up at the top. Paul's idea is that God will make all things "add up" at the end, and right now He is in the process of coming to that final sum.

ii. This shows that God wants to unify all things in our lives under Him. "It is a heresy of our times to divide life into

sacred and secular.” (Foulkes)

iii. This is the great resolution and deliverance that even the creation groans for (Rom_8:18-22), the day when every wrong will be righted and every matter resolved according to God’s holy love and justice.

iv. Bruce on **the fullness of the times**: “When the time is ripe for the consummation of his purpose, in his providential overruling of the course of the world, that consummation will be realized.”

c. **In Him also we have obtained an inheritance**: For believers, Jesus is not a judge, but the One in whom we have an inheritance. Believers are predestined for this according to the **counsel of His will** - again, the reasons for His choosing reside in Him, not in us.

d. **Being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will**: We see three aspects of God’s plan working together. It begins with His **purpose**, then the **counsel of His will**, and finally results in His **work**. God makes His plan carefully according to an eternal purpose, taking **counsel** within the Godhead, and then He works with all wisdom.

i. “Our God is a God who not only wills; He works; and He works according to His will . . . The word *counsel* stands for deliberate planning and arranging, in which the ways and means of carrying out the will are considered and provided for.” (Morgan)

ii. **By the counsel of His will**: “God doth all by counsel, and ever hath a reason of his will, which though we see not for present, we shall at last day. Meanwhile submit.” (Trapp)

e. **That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory**: God’s purpose in all this is so that those who have trusted Christ will exist **to the praise of His glory**. The goal of God’s ultimate plan is to glorify Him.

f. **We who first trusted in Christ**: This speaks of Jewish believers. The words *you also* in Eph_1:13 speak of Gentile

believers. God's great plan has a place for both Jew and Gentile, and brings them both together in Jesus.

4. (Eph_1:13-14) The work of the Holy Spirit.

In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

a. **In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth:** God's sovereign choice works, but it does not exclude human cooperation. These ones who were so sovereignly chosen were also the ones who **trusted, heard the word of truth, and believed.**

b. **You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise:** Also essential in God's work is the sealing work of the Holy Spirit. His presence in our lives acts as a seal which indicates ownership, and which is a **guarantee of our inheritance.**

i. "The seal is therefore the Holy Spirit Himself, and His presence in the believer denotes ownership and security.

The sealing with the Spirit is not an emotional feeling or some mysterious inward experience." (Gaebelein)

ii. The word **guarantee** ("down payment") is used only in the New Testament of the Holy Spirit. He is our *only* down payment of coming glory; nothing else is provided - or *needed*.

c. **Having believed, you were sealed:** The sealing does not come *before* we believe, and those who demand some assurance from God before they will believe treat God as if His word could not be trusted.

i. "For sealing there are needed the softened wax; the imprint of the beloved face; the steady pressure. Would that the Spirit might impress the face of our dear Lord on our softened hearts, that they may keep it for evermore!"

(Meyer)

d. **Until the redemption of the purchased possession:** We have this **guarantee** until we are "completely

purchased” by God through resurrection and glorification - again, all to the **praise of His glory** .

C. Paul prays in light of God’s ultimate plan and the work of the Triune God.

1. (Eph_1:15-16) Paul’s statement of prayer and declaration of thanksgiving.

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: a. **After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints:** When Paul heard of the **faith** and **love** of the Ephesians, he could do nothing else but **give thanks** for them. This was because their **faith** and **love** were evidence of their participation in this great work of God.

i. Faith and love do not *earn* us participation in this great work of God. They are *evidence* of our participation in God’s plan.

b. **Love for all the saints:** Significantly, Paul gave thanks not for their love for God, but for their **love for all the saints**. The real evidence of God’s work in us is not the love we claim to have for Him, but our love for His people that others can see (1Jn_4:20, Joh_13:14 and Joh_13:34-35).

c. **Making mention of you in my prayers:** Paul not only gave thanks for God’s work among the Ephesians; he also prayed that it would continue with greater strength, as the prayer in Eph_1:17-23 makes clear.

i. Paul shows us here that preachers must do more than preach to their audience - they must also *pray* for them.

“Whether a minister shall do more good to others by his prayers or preaching, I will not determine, but he shall certainly by his prayers reap more comfort to himself.” (Trapp)

ii. Paul often prayed **making mention** of others in prayer. When he prayed he mentioned the Christians in Rome (Rom_1:9), the Christians in Thessalonica (1Th_1:2), and Philemon (Phm_1:4).

2. (Eph_1:17) Paul prays that they would know God.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, a. **May give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation:** Paul prayed that the Father would grant the Ephesians **the spirit of wisdom** and that He would give them **revelation**. But these are not so they may see into the lives of others, have the ability to predict events, or do what we commonly think of as “prophet stuff.” He wanted them to have **the spirit of wisdom and revelation** simply so that they would have a better **knowledge of Him** (God).

b. **In the knowledge of Him:** Our Christian life must be centered around this purpose - to know God as He is in truth, as revealed by His Word; and to correct our false, idolatrous ideas of who God is.

c. **The knowledge of Him:** It is important for us to have an accurate knowledge and understanding of who *we* are. Yet it is far more important (and beneficial) for us to know and understand who God is.

i. A famous writer named Alexander Pope wrote, “Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; the proper study of mankind is man.” Charles Spurgeon responded to this famous statement: “It has been said by someone that ‘the proper study of mankind is man.’ I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.”

ii. “For philosophy comes to man with the message, *Know thyself*; the Gospel meets him with the far more glorious and fruitful watchword, *Know thy God*. ” (Alford)

3. (Eph_1:18-19 a) Paul prays that they would understand everything God gave them in Jesus Christ.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, a. **The eyes of your understanding being enlightened:** If the Ephesians will know all God has given them in Jesus, it will take a supernatural work. It will require that **the eyes of your understanding** be **enlightened** by God.

i. Paul uses a great expression when he speaks of *the eyes of your heart* (*heart* is more literal than *understanding*).

Too many Christian *hearts* have no eyes (places where they gain real knowledge and understanding), and too many Christian *eyes* have no heart - God wants both to be combined in us.

ii. "The word '*heart*' in Scripture signifies the very core and centre of life, where the intelligence has its post of observation, where the stores of experience are laid up, and the thoughts have their fountain." (Alford) b. **What is the hope of His calling:** Paul wanted them to know this. Few things give us a more secure and enduring **hope** in life than simply knowing that God has called us and has a specific **calling** for us to fulfill.

i. The **hope of His calling** has its perspective on the *future*. The believer has a glorious future of resurrection, eternal life, freedom from sin, perfected justification, glorious elevation above the angels themselves.

c. **What are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints:** Paul wanted them to know the greatness of God's inheritance in His people. We usually think only of *our* inheritance in God, but Paul wanted the Ephesians to understand that they are so precious to God that He considered them *His* own **inheritance**.

i. Several commentators believe that Paul also spoke of God's inheritance in His people back in Eph_1:11. But that is certainly his idea here, with Paul probably drawing his idea from Deu_32:8-9 : *When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance.*

ii. Knowing our spiritual poverty, we wonder how can God find *any* inheritance in the saints. Yet God can make riches out of poor men and women because He invests so much in them. He has invests riches of love, riches of wisdom, riches of suffering, riches of glory. These things accrue to a rich inheritance in the saints.

d. **The exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe:** Paul wanted them to know how great the **power** of God is **towards us who believe**. Christians should know they serve and love a God of living power who shows His strength on behalf of His people.

i. Many Christians do not know this power - or they only know it from a distance. God wants resurrection life to be *real* in the life of the believer. "The very same power which raised Christ is waiting to raise the drunkard from his drunkenness, to raise the thief from his dishonesty, to raise the Pharisee from his self-righteousness, to raise the Sadducee from his unbelief." (Spurgeon)

ii. This ends the "request" portion of Paul's prayer. The following section explains more of this mighty power and what it did. Paul asked these things because they were important to ask for. We could say that the prayer of Eph_1:17-19 is essentially a request that the promises of Eph_1:3-14 be found as real in the lives of the Ephesian Christians.

iii. "Perhaps the first and best response is the Amen of holy silence . . . These sentences were written first and

supremely to be believed, received, and - in a worshipping and serving life - lived out.” (Moule)

iv. In the same way, your prayers for the spiritual growth and enlightenment of others are important. If Paul believed it was important to pray these things for the Ephesian Christians, it is important for us to pray them for others - and ourselves.

4. (Eph_1:19-21) A description of the great power of God that Paul wants the Ephesians to know.

According to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

a. **According to the working of His mighty power:** The power that works in us is the **mighty power** that raised Jesus **from the dead**. With this **mighty power** available to us, there never needs to be a “power shortage” in the Christian life.

i. “If the death of Christ is the supreme demonstration of the love of God . . . the resurrection of Christ is the supreme demonstration of his power.” (Bruce)

b. **And seated Him at His right hand:** It is the **mighty power** that raised Jesus to heaven after His resurrection, raising Him above all demonic foes and every potential enemy of all time - this *same* power is at work in Christians.

i. “The *right hand* is the place of friendship, honour, confidence, and authority.” (Clarke)

c. **Far above all principality and power and might and dominion:** From other passages in Ephesians (Eph_3:10

and Eph_6:12) we know that this refers to angelic beings, both loyal and lethal. We don’t completely understand the ranks of the angelic realm, but we do know that Jesus is raised above them. “We know that the king is above all, though we cannot name all the officers of his court. So we

know that Christ is above all, though we are not able to name all His subjects.” (Alford)

i. “Think of the paradox. The Apostle is speaking of a Personage of history, of recent, almost contemporary, history . . . He had worked with His hands, He had walked from place to place like other men, and man could no doubt accurately describe His look and manner when He talked . . . He is now ‘seated at the right hand of’ Almighty God, on His very throne.” (Moule)

5. (Eph_1:22-23) Where this great power has placed Jesus. And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

a. **He put all things under His feet:** This great resurrection power placed Jesus above all things. Now all things are **under His feet**. It set Jesus as the **head over all things**, including the church.

i. “He says that Christ in his exaltation over the universe is God’s gift to the church.” (Wood)

b. **The church, which is His body:** If Jesus is the head, then the community of Christians make up **His body**. The idea of **the fullness of Him** here is probably connected to the manner in which Jesus fills His church with His presence and blessings.

i. “Yes, this is here given as the final glory of the infinitely exalted Christ. Angels and archangels are subject to Him. But believing men are *joined to Him*, with a union such that He and they, by this same messenger of His, are called elsewhere (1Co_12:12) one ‘*Christ*.’” (Moule)

ii. “That is, of Christ, who having voluntarily subjected himself to be our Head, accounts not himself complete without his members. In which respect we have the honour of making Christ perfect as the members do the body.” (Trapp)

(Eph 1:2) Grace and peace to you⁴ from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

(Eph 1:3) ***Spiritual Blessings in Christ***

Blessed⁵ is⁶ the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed⁷ us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ.

(Eph 1:4) For⁸ he chose us in Christ⁹ before the foundation of the world that we may be holy and unblemished¹⁰ in his sight¹¹ in love.¹²

(Eph 1:5) He did this by predestining¹³ us to adoption as his¹⁴ sons¹⁵ through Jesus Christ, according to the pleasure¹⁶ of his will — (Eph 1:6) to the praise of the glory of his grace¹⁷ that he has freely bestowed on us in his dearly loved Son.¹⁸

(Eph 1:7) In him¹⁹ we have redemption through his blood,²⁰ the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace (Eph 1:8) that he lavished on us in all wisdom and insight.

(Eph 1:9) He did this when he revealed²¹ to us the secret²² of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth²³ in Christ,²⁴

(Eph 1:10) toward the administration of the fullness of the times, to head up²⁵ all things in Christ — the things in heaven²⁶ and the things on earth.²⁷

(Eph 1:11) In Christ²⁸ we too have been claimed as God's own possession,²⁹ since we were predestined according to the one purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will (Eph 1:12) so that we, who were the first to set our hope³⁰ on Christ,³¹ would be to the praise of his glory.

(Eph 1:13) And when³² you heard the word of truth (the gospel of your salvation) — when you believed in Christ³³ — you were marked with the seal³⁴ of the promised Holy Spirit,³⁵

(Eph 1:14) who is the down payment³⁶ of our inheritance, until the redemption of God's own possession,³⁷ to the praise of his glory.

(Eph 1:15) ***Prayer for Wisdom and Revelation***

For this reason,³⁸ because I³⁹ have heard⁴⁰ of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love⁴¹ for all the saints,

(Eph 1:16) I do not cease to give thanks for you when I remember you⁴² in my prayers.

(Eph 1:17) I pray that⁴³ the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,⁴⁴ may give you spiritual wisdom and revelation⁴⁵ in your growing knowledge of him,⁴⁶

(Eph 1:18) — since the eyes of your⁴⁷ heart have been enlightened⁴⁸ — so that you may know what is the hope of his calling,⁴⁹ what is the wealth of his glorious⁵⁰ inheritance in the saints, (Eph 1:19) and what is the incomparable⁵¹ greatness of his power toward⁵² us who believe, as displayed in⁵³ the exercise of his immense strength.⁵⁴

(Eph 1:20) This power⁵⁵ he exercised⁵⁶ in Christ when he raised him⁵⁷ from the dead and seated him⁵⁸ at his right hand in the heavenly realms⁵⁹

(Eph 1:21) far above every rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

(Eph 1:22) And God⁶⁰ *put* ⁶¹ *all things under* Christ's⁶² *feet*,⁶³ and he gave him to the church as head over all things.⁶⁴

(Eph 1:23) Now the church is⁶⁵ his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.⁶⁶

(Eph 2:1) ***New Life Individually***

And although you were¹ dead² in your transgressions and sins,

(Guzik)

Eph 2:1-22

Ephesians 2 - GOD'S WAY OF RECONCILIATION

A. The need for reconciliation.

1. (Eph_2:1) Christians are alive from the dead.

And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

a. **And you He made alive:** The words **He made alive** are in italics, which indicates that they are added to the text but implied from the context. Paul wrote to believers who were **made alive** by God's work.

i. Paul ended the last chapter by considering that the ultimate example of God's power was the resurrection of Jesus. Now Paul considers what the implications of Jesus' resurrection power are for our life.

b. **Who were dead in trespasses and sins:** Though Christians are now **alive**, they must never forget where they came *from*. They were **dead in trespasses and sins**.

i. There are many kinds of life: vegetable life, animal life, mental life, moral life, and spiritual life. A being might be alive in one sense but dead in another. To be spiritually dead does not mean that we are physically dead, socially dead, or psychologically dead. Yet it is a real death, a dead death nonetheless. "The most vital part of man's personality - the spirit - is dead to the most important factor in life - God." (Wood) "Not in a moral sense, nor a mental sense, but in a spiritual sense, poor humanity is dead, and so the word of God again and again most positively describes it." (Spurgeon)

ii. This touches on one of the most controversial areas in theology - in what manner, and to what extent, is a person **dead** before conversion? Must a person be converted *before* they can believe, or can there be a prior work of God to instill faith that is still short of conversion? Those who argue that man must be regenerated *before* he can believe like to say that a dead man cannot believe. This takes this particular description further than intended, to say that unredeemed man is *exactly like* a dead man, because a dead man also *cannot sin*.

iii. We err if we think that **dead in trespasses and sins** says *everything* about man's lost condition. It is an err

because the Bible uses many different pictures to describe the state of the unsaved man, saying he is: · Blind (2Co_4:3-4)

- A slave to sin (Rom_6:17)
- A lover of darkness (Joh_3:19-20)
- Sick (Mar_2:17)
- Lost (Luke 15)
- An alien, a stranger, a foreigner (Eph_2:12; Eph_2:19)
- A child of wrath (Eph_2:3)
- Under the power of darkness (Col_1:13)

iv. Therefore, in some ways the unregenerate man is dead; in other ways he is not. Therefore, it is valid to *appeal to all men to believe*. We need not look for evidence of regeneration before we tell men to believe and be saved. As the Puritan John Trapp wrote, “Howbeit, the natural man, though he be theologically dead, yet is ethically alive, being to be wrought upon by arguments; hence Hos_11:4, “I drew them by the cords of a man,” that is, by reason and motives of love, befitting the nature of a man. So the Spirit and Word work upon us still as men by rational motives, setting before us life and good, death and evil.”

v. “A rock which is in nobody’s way may stand where it is. He that believes in Jesus is born again. These two things are equally true: there must be a work of the Spirit within, yet he that believeth in the Lord Jesus hath everlasting life.” (Spurgeon)

c. **In trespasses and sins:** The idea behind the word **trespasses** is that we have crossed a line, challenging God’s boundaries. The idea behind the word **sins** is that we have missed a mark, the perfect standards of God.

i. **Trespasses** speaks of man as a rebel, **sins** speaks of man as a failure. “Before God we are both rebels and failures.” (Stott)

2. (Eph_2:2-3) The life of death.

In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the

spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

a. **In which you once walked:** At one time we lived in *trespasses and sins*, **according to the course of this world**, which is orchestrated by Satan. Satan (**the prince of the power of the air**) is still very much active among those in rebellion against God - **the sons of disobedience**.

b. **You once walked:** The self that **once walked** is the old man, now crucified with Jesus at the time of conversion. The sin nature inherited from Adam influences the old man, but the world system and Satan do also.

i. **Once walked** means it should be different for those what are made alive by Jesus Christ. A dead man feels comfortable in his coffin; but if he were to be made alive again, he would instantly feel suffocated and uncomfortable. There would be a strong urge to escape the coffin and leave it behind. In the same way, when were spiritually dead we felt comfortable in trespasses and sins; but having come to new life we feel we must escape that coffin and leave it behind.

c. **Who now works in the sons of disobedience:** In sin we respond to Satan's "guidance." The same ancient Greek verb is used in Eph_2:2 for the work of Satan in unbelievers as is used in Eph_3:20 for the power of God that works in believers.

d. **The prince of the power of the air:** This unique title for Satan speaks of his authority (**prince**) and his realm (**the air**, a way of referring to Satan's "environment").

i. "The *domain of the air*, in fact, is another way of indicating the *heavenly realm*, which, according to Eph_6:12, is the abode of those principalities and powers, *world-rulers of this darkness* and *spiritual forces of wickedness* against which the people of Christ wage war." (Bruce)

ii. Satan is not the ultimate ruler, but he is a prince in the sense that “Evil men set him up for their sovereign, and are wholly at his beck and obedience.” (Trapp)

e. **We all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh:** We once we among the *sons of disobedience*, proven by our conduct. We embraced **the lusts of the flesh**, which are primarily perversions of the legitimate desires of human nature.

i. “The converts are to be reminded what they have been delivered from, as well as what they have been lifted into. They must be led to look down again into the pit, into the grave, from which grace called them out and set them free.” (Moule)

f. **And were by nature children of wrath:** Because of our surrender to the old man, the world, and the devil, we **were by nature children of wrath**. We rightfully deserved God’s wrath, and deserved it because of who we are by our heritage.

i. The Bible knows nothing of the idea that all men are “children of God,” except in the sense that He is our common creator (Act_17:28). Here Paul says that there is a “family” of wrath that has its children, and Jesus called the Pharisees “a family of snakes” (Mat_3:7; Mat_12:34; Mat_23:33) and said that their father was the Devil (Joh_8:44).

ii. We must take seriously the idea that the **children of wrath** *rightly* deserve God’s wrath. They are not “victims” at all. Instead, they are just targets of God’s justice.

B. The process of personal reconciliation to God.

1. (Eph_2:4) God’s motive in reconciliation.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

a. **But God . . . because of His great love:** With **but** and **because**, Paul explains God’s reason behind reconciling man to Himself, and these reasons are found totally in God.

The reasons are His rich **mercy** and **His great love**, which He focuses on **us**.

i. "As they were *corrupt* in their *nature*, and *sinful* in their *practice*, they could possess no *merit*, nor have any *claim* upon God; and it required much *mercy* to remove so much *misery*, and to pardon such transgressions."

(Clarke)

b. **With which He loved us:** We might imagine a God of rich **mercy** and **great love** who did not focus that mercy and love upon *us*. But behind the good news of God's salvation offered in Jesus is the fact that this mercy and love *is* extended to **us**.

c. **His great love with which He loved us:** Some warp the idea of God's great mercy and love into something that justifies our pride. Some imagine that God loves us *because we are so lovable*. Instead, God's love is so great that it extends even to the unlovely - to the *children of wrath* mentioned in the previous verse.

i. Every reason for God's mercy and love is found in Him. We give Him no *reason* to love us, yet in the greatness of His love, He loves us with that great love anyway.

ii. Therefore, we must stop trying to make ourselves lovable to God, and simply receive His great love while recognizing that we are unworthy of it. This is the *grace secret* of the Christian life.

2. (Eph_2:5-7) The past, present and future of God's work of individual reconciliation.

Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

a. **When we were dead:** This is when God started loving us. He did not wait until we were lovable. He loved us even

when we were **dead in trespasses**, providing nothing lovable to Him.

i. This is the requirement for being saved. You must first be dead, dead to every attempt to justify yourself before God. *He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me . . . has passed from death into life* (Joh_5:24).

b. **Made alive together with Christ:** This is what God did to those dead in sin. He shared in our death that we could share in His resurrection life. The old man is crucified and we are new creations in Jesus with the old things passing away and all things becoming new.

i. **By grace you have been saved:** Paul is compelled to add here that this is the work of God's **grace**, in no way involving man's merit. Our salvation - our rescue - from spiritual death is God's work done for the undeserving.

c. **Sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus:** This is the present position of the Christian. We have a new place for living, a new arena of existence - we are not *those who dwell on the earth* (as Revelation often calls them), but our *citizenship is in heaven* (Php_3:20).

i. We don't sit in the heavenly places *with* Christ Jesus, or at least not yet. Instead, we sit in the heavenly places **in Christ** Jesus. Since our life and identity is **in Christ**, as He sits in heavenly places, so do we.

ii. "And now we *sit in heavenly places* - we have a *right* to the kingdom of God, anticipate this glory, and are indescribably happy in the possession of this salvation, and in our fellowship with Christ Jesus." (Clarke)

d. **In the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace:** *In the future*, God will continue to **show the exceeding riches of His grace** to us. God will never stop dealing with us on the basis of grace, and will forever continue to unfold its riches to us through eternity.

i. **He might show:** "The original implies, that the exhibition is for His own purpose, for his own glory." (Alford) This work in us reflects infinitely more on the glory of *God* than on our

own glory, and God will use His work in the Church to display His glory throughout the ages.

ii. "From this verse it is clear that Paul fully expected the gospel of the grace of God to be preached in the ages to come. He had no notion of a temporary gospel to develop into a better, but he was assured that the same gospel would be preached to the end of the dispensation. Nor this alone; for as I take it, he looked to the perpetuity of the gospel, not only through the ages which have already elapsed since the first advent of our blessed Lord, but throughout the ages after he shall have come a second time. Eternity itself will not improve upon the gospel."

(Spurgeon)

iii. "When all the saints shall be gathered home they shall still talk and speak of the wonders of Jehovah's love in Christ Jesus, and in the golden streets they shall stand up and tell what the Lord has done for them to listening

crowds of angels, and principalities, and powers."

(Spurgeon)

iv. **The riches of His grace:** "So is it with the grace of God: he has as much grace as you want, and he has a great deal more than that. The Lord has as much grace as a whole universe will require, but he has vastly more. He overflows: all the demands that can ever be made on the grace of God will never impoverish him, or even diminish his store of mercy; there will remain an incalculably precious mine of mercy as full as when he first began to bless the sons of men." (Spurgeon)

v. One way to see the greatness of the grace of God is to see how He *begs* man to receive it. When we offer a gift to someone and they refuse it, we are likely to allow them to refuse and leave them alone. God does not do this with us; even when we refuse His mercy He reaches into His storehouse of grace and persists with us, *begging* us to receive the free gift.

3. (Eph_2:8-10) A summing up of God's work of individual reconciliation.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

a. **For by grace you have been saved:** Paul cannot speak of this glorious work God does without reminding us that it is a gift of **grace**, given to the undeserving. We are not even saved by our faith (though faith itself is not a work), but **by** grace **through** faith.

i. We can think of water flowing through a hose. The water is the important part, but it is communicated through the hose. The hose does not quench your thirst; the water does. But the hose brings water to the place you can benefit from it.

ii. "The precise form of words here stresses two things. As consistently emphasized by Paul, it is entirely of His *grace*, His free, undeserved favour to mankind. Then also this salvation is presented as an accomplished fact."

(Foulkes)

b. **And that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God:** The work of salvation is God's gift. Paul's grammar here indicates that the words apply to the gift of *salvation* mentioned in Eph_2:4-8, and not directly to the **faith** mentioned in this verse.

i. Clarke emphatically states that the original Greek is clear in noting that when it says **it is the gift of God**, the **it** referred to is *salvation*, not *faith*. The great Greek scholar Dean Alford also clearly pointed out that the **this not of yourselves** referred to *salvation*, not to *faith* in this passage.

ii. Yet, even our faith is a **gift of God**. We *cannot* believe in Jesus unless God does a prior work in us, for we are blinded by our own deadness and by the god of this age (2Co_4:4).

iii. "But it may be asked: Is not *faith* the *gift of God*? Yes, as to the *grace* by which it is produced; but the *grace* or *power* to believe, and the act of believing, are two different things. Without the *grace* or *power* to believe no man ever did or can believe; but with that *power* the *act of faith* is a man's own. God never believes *for* any man, no more than he *repents* for him; the penitent, through this grace enabling him, believes for himself." (Clarke) iv. This shows us the essential place of *prayer* in evangelism. Since God initiates salvation, we should begin our evangelism with asking God to do the initiating, and granting the ability to believe to those we want to see saved.

c. **Not of works, lest anyone should boast:** God did it **not of works** simply so that no one could **boast**. If salvation was the accomplishment of man in any way, we could boast about it. But under God's plan of salvation, God alone receives the glory.

i. "I thought Napoleon did a good thing, when, on the day of his coronation, he took his crown, and put it on his own head. Why should he not take the symbol that was his due? And if you get to heaven, one half by grace and one half by works, you will say, 'Atonement profited me a little, but integrity profited me much more.'" (Spurgeon)

d. **For we are His workmanship:** God saves us not merely to save us from the wrath we rightly deserve, but also to make something beautiful of us. We are **His workmanship**, which translates the ancient Greek word *poiema*. The idea is that we are His beautiful poem. The Jerusalem Bible translates **workmanship** as "work of art."

i. God's love is a transforming love. It meets us right where we are at, but when we receive this love it always takes us where we should be going. The love of God that saves my soul will also change my life.

ii. We are **His workmanship**, His creation - something new He has made of us in Jesus Christ. "The spiritual life cannot

come to us by development from our old nature. I have heard a great deal about evolution and development, but I am afraid that if any one of us were to be developed to our utmost, apart from the grace of God, we should come out worse than before the development began.” (Spurgeon)

iii. “Our new life is as truly *created out of nothing* as were the first heavens, and the first earth. This ought to be particularly noticed, for there are some who think that the grace of God improves the old nature into the new. It does nothing of the sort.” (Spurgeon)

e. **Created in Christ Jesus for good works:** That beautiful thing God is making of us is active in **good works**. These are just as much a part of God’s predestined plan as anything else is. These good works are valid evidence that someone is walking as one of God’s chosen.

i. “Works play no part at all in securing salvation. But afterwards Christians will prove their faith by their works. Here Paul shows himself at one with James.” (Wood)

C. The reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles in Jesus.

1. (Eph_2:11-12) The need for the reconciliation of Gentile and Jew.

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh; who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands; that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

a. **You, once Gentiles in the flesh:** God’s work of reconciliation is not only between God and the individual, though it must begin there. It is also between groups of people that are at odds, such as Jews and Gentiles were in the days of Paul.

b. **Who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision:** Gentiles were in a desperate place, being **aliens, strangers, having no hope** and being

without God. This shows that they were not only spiritually dead, but they also did not have the access to God that the Jews enjoyed.

i. Before coming to Jesus, Gentiles were “Christless, stateless, friendless, hopeless and Godless.” (Stott quoting Hendriksen)

ii. **Having no hope:** “The absence of hope in the face of death is amply attested in the literature and epigraphy of the Gaeco-Roman world of that day.” (Bruce)

iii. **Without God in the world:** Some people believe in God, but they believe He lives in heaven and has nothing to do with this **world**. In that way, a person can still believe in God and be **without God in the world**.

c. **Without Christ:** These are terrible words, and the implications of them sum of the woeful condition of the lost man or woman. To be **without Christ** means to be:

- Without spiritual blessings

- Without light
- Without peace
- Without rest
- Without safety
- Without hope
- Without a Prophet, Priest, or King

i. “Without Christ! If this be the description of some of you, we need not talk to you about the fires of hell; let this be enough to startle you, that you are in such a desperate state as to be without Christ. Oh! What terrible evils lie clustering thick within these two words!” (Spurgeon)

d. **Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel:** This likely includes separated Jews as well as Gentiles. “For there were also Israelites who were outside the commonwealth, not only as foreigners but as lax Jews, and lost their part in the covenants, not as foreigners, but as unworthy.” (Alford)

2. (Eph_2:13) Gentiles brought near to God.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

a. **But now in Christ Jesus:** Those Gentiles who are **now in Christ Jesus** are no longer **far off**. They are **made near** to the things of God, and the **blood of Christ** accomplishes this, by His sacrificial death.

i. This coming near happens only **by the blood of Christ**.

Gentiles who are not **in Christ Jesus** are just as **far off** as they ever were. This reconciliation only happens in Jesus.

ii. It is important the Paul connects the ideas of the great love of Jesus and His sacrificial death. Many people think that preaching Christ crucified is all about a bloody, gory Jesus. But the point of Christ crucified is not gore, but love. Preaching Christ crucified means we preach Jesus full of love - sacrificial, giving, saving love.

b. **By the blood of Christ:** Many people suggest different ways to come **near** to God. Some think you can come by keeping the law, or by belonging to a group (such as Israel or even the church). But the only way to be **brought near** to God is **by the blood of Christ**. What Jesus did on the cross, suffering as a guilty sinner in the place of guilty sinners, brings us **near** to God.

3. (Eph_2:14-16) Jew and Gentile brought together in the Church.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

a. **For He Himself is our peace:** Jesus Himself is our peace; He hasn't simply *made* peace between God and man and Jew and Gentile; He ***is* our peace**.

b. **Who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation:** The work of Jesus on the cross is the common ground of salvation for both Jew and Gentile.

Therefore there is no longer any dividing wall between Jew and Gentile. Jesus broke that wall down.

i. In the temple, in between the court of the Gentiles and the court of the women, there was a physical barrier, an actual **wall of separation** between Jew and Gentile.

ii. Paul was, at the time of this writing, under house arrest in Rome, awaiting trial because he was falsely accused by the Jews of taking a Gentile into the temple past the literal **wall of separation** dividing Jew and Gentile. Paul makes it clear that in Jesus, the wall is gone.

iii. The **wall of separation** is gone because the common Lordship is greater than any previous division. If the Lordship of Jesus Christ is not greater than any difference you have with others - be it political, racial, economic, language, geography or whatever, then you have not fully understood what it means to be under the Lordship of Jesus.

c. **Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances:**

The source of contention between Jew and Gentile was the fact that the Gentiles did not keep the law. But since Jesus fulfilled the law on our behalf, and since He bore the penalty for our failure to keep the law, we are reconciled through His work on the cross - putting to death the *source* of contention.

i. "The *enmity* of which the apostle speaks was reciprocal among the *Jews* and *Gentiles*. The *former* detested the *Gentiles*, and could hardly allow them the denomination of *men*; the *latter* had the *Jews* in the most sovereign contempt, because of the peculiarity of their religious rites and ceremonies, which were different from those of all the other nations of the earth." (Clarke)

ii. "And the separation was intensified and emphasized by those institutions which were, in part, *designed* to isolate Israel from the world, until the fit time for the wider blessing. And He 'annulled' them by fulfilling them, in His sacrificial

work; thus at once reconciling man to God and man to man.” (Moule)

iii. The law as a source of righteousness is no longer an issue. That source of **enmity** between Jew and Gentile is dead.

d. **That He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross:** Gentiles and Jews are brought together into **one body**, the Church, where our unity in Jesus is far greater than our previous differences.

i. **So as to create in Himself one new man from the two:** Early Christians called themselves a “third race” or a “new race.” Early Christians recognized that they were not Jews, not Gentiles, but **one new man** embracing all who are in Jesus.

ii. “As Chrysostom explained, it is not that Christ has brought one up to the level of the other, but that he has produced a greater: ‘as if one should melt down one statue of silver and another of lead, and the two together should come out gold.’” (Wood)

e. **Through the cross:** We see the emphasis Paul places on the work of Jesus on the cross. He repeats the idea several times: **made near by the blood . . . having abolished in His flesh the enmity . . . in one body through the cross.** This unity did just happen, it was the hard-fought accomplishment of Jesus.

i. This means that Jesus’ prayer in John 17 (*that they all may be one*) wasn’t “just” a prayer. It was a prayer Jesus prayed knowing that His work of the cross would *accomplish* and a prayer He was willing to pray knowing His *agony* would be used to answer.

ii. This bringing together of Jew and Gentile in Jesus is a partial fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose as stated in Eph_1:10 : *that . . . He might gather together in one all things in Christ.* God uses the bringing together Jew and Gentile into the Church as a preview of His ultimate work of summing up all things into Jesus Christ. Since He can

do this, He can also do that.

4. (Eph_2:17-18) How Jews and Gentiles are brought together.

And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

a. **He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near:** As they respond to the same gospel, the same **peace** that is **preached** to those **afar off** (Gentiles) and those **near** (Jews).

b. **Through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father:** They enjoy the same **access** to God, access that comes **by one Spirit to the Father**. Not only are Jews and Gentiles saved by the same gospel, but they also have the same essential walk with God and **access** to Him. One group does not have a greater **access** than the other does.

i. "Access is probably the best translation of *prosagoge*, though it could be 'introduction.' In oriental courts there was a *prosagoge* who brought a person into the presence of the king." (Foulkes) ii. When conflict arises among Christian groups of different backgrounds, you can be sure that they forget that they were saved by the same gospel and that they have the same access to God. One or both groups usually feel they have superior access to God.

iii. "This text is a plain proof of the *holy Trinity*. Jews and Gentiles are to be presented unto *God the FATHER*; the *SPIRIT* of God works in their hearts, and prepares them for this presentation; and *JESUS CHRIST* himself *introduces* them." (Clarke)

5. (Eph_2:19-22) A picture of God's work of reconciliation, both individual and among groups.

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the

chief corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

a. **You are no longer strangers and foreigners:** Paul refers to Christians of Gentile background. They should not regard themselves as “second-class citizens” in God’s kingdom in any regard. They are not only full **citizens**, but also full and equal members of God’s **household**.

b. **Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets:** Because we are one body and have the same access to God, it also follows that we are all built upon a common **foundation**. That foundation is the original **apostles and prophets**, and their enduring revelation, recorded in the New Testament. May no one ever lay any other foundation.

i. Though Chrysostom, Jerome, Calvin and others saw the **prophets** mentioned as Old Testament prophets, it is better to see them as New Testament prophets, perhaps New Testament authors who were not strictly members of the core apostolic group.

ii. “Those who ranked next to the Apostles in the government of the church . . . They were not in every case distinct from the Apostles: the apostleship probably always including the gift of *prophecy*: so that all the Apostles themselves might likewise have been *prophets*.” (Alford)

iii. In this sense of laying a foundation of supremely authoritative revelation for all God’s people, there are no more **apostles** or **prophets** today. The foundation is already set. In a *lesser* sense there may be apostles and prophets today, but not in the sense Paul means here.

c. **Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone:** This **corner stone** “literally means at the tip of the angle. It refers to the capstone or binding stone that holds the whole structure together . . . often the royal name was inscribed on it.

In the East it was considered to be even more important than the foundation.” (Wood)

i. Salmond on **corner stone**: “It denotes the stone placed at the extreme corner, so as to bind the other stones in the building together - the most important stone in the structure, the one on which its stability depended.”

ii. “That structure and cohesion may have for its *scaffolding* the sacred order of the Church in her visible aspect.

But the *cement* is not of these things; it is wholly divine; it is the Spirit, possessing each saint for God, and binding them all together by articulating them all to their Head.” (Moule)

d. **In whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord**: As we keep to our common foundation, the **whole building** of God’s people grows together in a beautiful way, as a **holy temple** where God dwells in beauty and glory.

i. This tells us that the Church is a **building**, perfectly designed by the Great Architect. It is not a haphazard pile of stones, randomly dumped in a field. God *arranges* the Church for His own glory and purposes.

ii. This tells us that the Church is a **dwelling place**, a place where God lives. It is never to be an empty house that is virtually a museum, with no one *living* inside. The Church is to be both the living place of God and His people.

iii. This tells us that the Church is a **temple**, holy and set apart to God. We serve there as priests, offering the spiritual sacrifices of our lips and hearts, our praises to God (Heb_13:15).

e. **You also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit**: When Solomon’s temple was built, the stones were prepared at a place far from the temple building site. They said that you couldn’t hear the sound of a hammer or axe or other iron tools at the site (1Ki_6:7). In the same way, God prepares us first, and then He fits us into His building.

i. "The Father makes choice of this house, the Son purchaseth it, the Holy Ghost taketh possession of it." (Trapp)

ii. "And the everlasting FATHER will perfectly reveal Himself, to all the watchers of all the regions of the eternal world, not anyhow but *thus* - in His glorified Church, in the Race, the Nature, once wrecked and ruined, but rebuilt into this splendour by His grace." (Moule) iii. Adam Clarke explained how God's work in the Church gave glory to the wisdom, power, and love of God. See all this, we should praise God for His glorious Church.

- There is nothing as *noble* as the Church, seeing that it is the temple of God.

- There is nothing so worthy of *reverence*, seeing God that *dwells* in it.

- There is nothing so *ancient*, since the *patriarchs* and *prophets* worked to building it.

- There is nothing so *solid*, since *Jesus Christ* is the *foundation* of it.

- There is nothing so *high*, since it reaches as high as to the *heavenly places in Christ Jesus*.

- There is nothing so *perfect* and *well proportioned*, since the *Holy Spirit* is the *architect*.

- There is nothing more *beautiful*, because it is adorned with building stones of every age, every place, every people; from the highest kings to the lowest peasants; with the most brilliant scientists and the simplest believers.

- There is nothing more *spacious*, since it is spread over the whole earth, and takes in all who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

- There is nothing so *Divine*, since it is a *living* building, *animated* and *inhabited* by the *Holy Spirit*.

(Eph 2:2) in which³ you formerly lived⁴ according to this world's present path,⁵ according to the ruler of the

kingdom⁶ of the air, the ruler of⁷ the spirit⁸ that is now energizing⁹ the sons of disobedience,¹⁰

(Eph 2:3) among whom¹¹ all of us¹² also¹³ formerly lived out our lives in the cravings of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath¹⁴ even as the rest...¹⁵

(Eph 2:4) But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us,

(Eph 2:5) even though we were dead in transgressions, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you are saved!¹⁶ — (Eph 2:6) and he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

(Eph 2:7) to demonstrate in the coming ages¹⁷ the surpassing wealth of his grace in kindness toward¹⁸ us in Christ Jesus.

(Eph 2:8) For by grace you are saved¹⁹ through faith,²⁰ and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God;

(Eph 2:9) it is not from²¹ works, so that no one can boast.²²

(Eph 2:10) For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand so we may do them.²³

(Eph 2:11) ***New Life Corporately***

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh — who are called "uncircumcision" by the so-called "circumcision" that is performed on the body²⁴ by human hands —

(Eph 2:12) that you were at that time without the Messiah,²⁵ alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise,²⁶ having no hope and without God in the world.

(Eph 2:13) But now in Christ Jesus you who used to be far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.²⁷

(Eph 2:14) For he is our peace, the one who made both groups into one²⁸ and who destroyed the middle wall of partition, the hostility, (Eph 2:15) when he nullified²⁹ in his

flesh the law of commandments in decrees. He did this to create in himself one new man³⁰ out of two,³¹ thus making peace, (Eph 2:16) and to reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by which the hostility has been killed.³²

(Eph 2:17) And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near,

(Eph 2:18) so that³³ through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

(Eph 2:19) So then you are no longer foreigners and noncitizens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household, (Eph 2:20) because you have been built³⁴ on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,³⁵ with Christ Jesus himself as³⁶ the cornerstone.³⁷

(Eph 2:21) In him³⁸ the whole building,³⁹ being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

(Eph 2:22) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

(Eph 3:1) ***Paul's Relationship to the Divine Mystery***

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus¹ for the sake of you Gentiles —

(Guzik)

Eph 3:1-21

Ephesians 3 - THE REVEALING OF GOD'S MYSTERY

A. God's mystery and man's place in it revealed.

1. (Eph_3:1-5) Preface to the revelation of the mystery.

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles; if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it

has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

a. **I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles:** During his Roman imprisonment Paul was under house arrest. In the day he was free to move around the house with the supervision of soldiers, but every night he was chained to a soldier to make sure he did not escape before his trial before Caesar. But he saw himself as **the prisoner of Jesus Christ**. He knew that Jesus was the Lord of his life, not the Roman government, so if he was a prisoner, he was Jesus' prisoner.

i. In the same way, we don't work for a boss; we work for Jesus. We aren't parents for children; we are parents for Jesus. The same principle applies to any area of life.

b. **For you Gentiles:** The entire reason he was under arrest, awaiting trial was because of his missionary efforts on behalf of the Gentiles.

i. Paul suffered for the very truth he would explain to the Ephesians, and this did not make him back down one bit.

ii. The last thing Paul wanted was people to feel sorry for him because he was imprisoned. He wanted his readers to realize that it is a benefit for them that he was a prisoner.

c. **If indeed you have heard:** This suggests Paul knew his particular calling to the Gentile world was well known among Gentile Christians.

d. **You have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you:** The word **dispensation** speaks of the "implemented strategy" of God's plan in the church. "Here as in Eph_1:9, however, it is to be interpreted rather as the implementation of a strategy." (Wood) i. "By the *dispensation of the grace of God* we may understand, either the *apostolic office* and *gifts* granted to St.

Paul, for the purpose of preaching the Gospel among the Gentiles . . . or the *knowledge* which God gave him of that

gracious and Divine *plan* which he had formed for the conversion of the Gentiles.” (Clarke) e. **How that by revelation:** Paul wanted them to know, “I’m not making this up. This isn’t my invention. God gave me the **revelation** and I am only His messenger of this truth.” It cost Paul a lot to hold on to this mystery, so he probably would not have made it up himself.

i. It is indeed amazing that God would take a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee, and a persecutor of the church to be the main minister of the mystery, the mystery of the work of the gospel in bringing Jew and Gentile together into one new body.

f. **He made known to me the mystery:** The principle Paul will describe is a **mystery**, yet it is known. However, it would never be known if God did not make it **known**.

i. “In English a ‘mystery’ is something dark, obscure, secret, puzzling. What is ‘mysterious’ is inexplicable, even incomprehensible. The Greek word *mysterion* is different, however. Although still a ‘secret’, it is no longer closely guarded but open . . . More simply, *mysterion* is a truth hitherto hidden from human knowledge or understanding but now disclosed by the revelation of God.” (Stott)

g. **He made known to me the mystery:** Paul did not hesitate to claim that the mystery he will reveal was given to him **by revelation**. But it was not given to *only him* by revelation. It was also given specifically to Peter by revelation (Act_11:1-18), and it is consistent with prophecy in the Old Testament (such as Isa_49:6) and the specific words of Jesus (Act_1:8).

i. However, it seems that God used Paul to declare specifically how Jews and Gentiles would be joined together in

one Body of Christ. This was something hinted at through others, but only specifically detailed through Paul’s revelation. Paul trusted that his readers would understand what God revealed to him.

h. **Was not made known to the sons of men, as it now has been revealed:** The nature of the union of Jews and Gentiles into this new body is the aspect that was **not made known**. In the Old Testament, the salvation of Gentiles in the Messiah is prophesied, the coming together of Jew and Gentile into the Church is never spoken of.

2. (Eph_3:6-7) The mystery described.

That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

a. **That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body:** This describes the mystery itself - that believing Jews and believing Gentiles are joined together into one Body of Christ, into one Church, and no longer separated before God as such.

b. **Partakers of His promise in Christ:** The truth of this mystery means that Gentiles are now full **partakers of His promise**. This was a privilege no longer reserved only for the believing Jewish person.

c. **Through the gospel:** This could only happen **through the gospel**, where all men have an equal standing in Jesus. This is the same gospel Paul is a servant of, because of **the gift of grace given** to him by the working of God's power.

i. Paul says he is a **minister**, but that is a title of service, not exaltation. In classical literature of ancient Greece, the **minister** (*diakonos*) "is a table waiter who is always at the bidding of his customers." (Wood) 3. (Eph_3:8-9) Paul's presentation of the mystery.

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; a. **To me, who am less than the least of all the saints:** Paul marveled at the **grace** given

to him, by which he was called to preach the gospel that makes the mystery a reality. When we consider Paul's personal history, we see that his calling really was all of **grace**.

i. "But while Paul was thus thankful for his office, his success in it greatly humbled him. The fuller a vessel becomes the deeper it sinks in the water. A plenitude of grace is a cure for pride." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Preachers ought to grow in grace, for their very calling places them at a great advantage, since they are bound to search the Scriptures, and to be much in prayer. It is a choice mercy to be permitted to preach the gospel. I wish some of you would be ambitious of it, for earnest preachers are wanted." (Spurgeon)

b. **That I should preach:** The ancient Greek word translated "**preach**" literally means "to announce good news." Paul's *preaching* was simply the announcement of the good news of what God has done in Jesus.

c. **The unsearchable riches of Christ:** Their mystery is like great **riches** for the Gentiles. They can now come before God in a standing they could only dream of before.

i. Paul tried to figure out the greatness of God's grace, and started tracking it out as one might track out the shore of a lake. But he soon discovered that it wasn't a lake at all, but an ocean, an immeasurable sea. God's riches are unsearchable; we will never know them completely.

ii. **Unsearchable riches** also tells us this is something *good*. "The doctrines of the gospel are a golden throne upon which Jesus sits, as king-not a hard, cold stone rolled at the door of the sepulcher in which Christ is hidden." (Spurgeon)

iii. "I am bold to tell you that my Master's riches of grace are so unsearchable, that he delights to forgive and forget enormous sin; the bigger the sin the more glory to his grace. If you are over head and ears in debt, he is rich enough to

discharge your liabilities. If you are at the very gates of hell, he is able to pluck you from the jaws of destruction.”

(Spurgeon)

d. **To make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery:** Having been entrusted with such riches, Paul’s passion was to make this gospel known to *all people*. He wants everybody to see and share in the fellowship of this **mystery** -

which is a **mystery** precisely because it was unknown and unknowable until God revealed it.

e. **Fellowship of the mystery:** We should carefully consider what this phrase means. It demonstrates that these are not only facts to know but also a life to live, united in Jesus with other believers, without any separation such as existed between Jew and Gentile.

f. **Which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God:** This great truth - the **fellowship of the mystery** - was **hidden** before it was revealed after the finished work of Jesus on the cross. This reinforces the idea that there is genuinely something *new* in the New Covenant, and that it is wrong to consider Israel simply the Old Testament Church and the Church the New Testament Israel.

i. “This statement settles the question once for all concerning the existence of the church, the body of Christ, in and during the Old Testament dispensations. Yet it is one of the most widespread views that the church existed from the beginning of creation and the words of promise contained in the Old Testament prophetic Word are the promises of the church, and its glorious future on the earth, in reigning over the nations.” (Gaebelin)

3. (Eph_3:10-12) The purpose of the mystery.

To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we

have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

a. **That now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known:** God is a Being of infinite wisdom and glory, and He wants His creatures to know His great and **manifold wisdom**. One purpose in His great plan of the ages is to reveal this wisdom.

i. Understanding the character of God, we can say that this is not for a *selfish* or *self-glorying* motive, in the way we think of the proud man showing his brains and accomplishments to everyone. God does this for the glory of His *creatures*, because the glory of the creature is directly connected to the glory of the *Creator*.

ii. This wisdom is **manifold**. The ancient Greek word *polupoikilos*, has the ideas of intricacy, complexity, and great beauty. "That hath abundance of curious variety in it, such as is seen in the best pictures or textures." (Trapp) iii. It also *must be made known*. Dean Alford points out that the words **might be made known** are emphatic, strongly contrasting the idea of *hidden* in Eph_3:9.

b. **Might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers:** This explains *how* God will reveal His wisdom, and to *whom* He reveals it. He will reveal it *by* His work in **the church**, and He will reveal it *to* angelic beings (**principalities and powers**).

i. Of course, God also wants to reveal this wisdom to the church. But in the big picture, God doesn't use the angels to reveal His wisdom to the saints, but He does use the saints to reveal His wisdom to the angelic beings, both faithful and fallen angels. This reminds us that we are called for something far greater than our own individual salvation and sanctification. We are called to be the means by which God teaches the universe a lesson, and a beautiful lesson.

ii. We are surrounded by invisible spiritual beings, and they intently look upon us. Here, Paul draws back the

invisible curtain that hides these beings just as Elisha prayed at Dothan, *LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.* (2Ki_6:17) These angelic beings see us perfectly and know us far better than we know them.

iii. "What then have they to learn *from us*? Ah, they have to learn something which makes them watch us with wonder and with awe. They see in us indeed all our weakness, and all our sin. But they see a nature which, wrecked by itself, was yet made in the image of their God and ours. And they see this God at work upon that wreck to produce results not only wonderful in themselves but doubly wonderful because of the conditions." (Moule)

iv. "In his immortality, never touched by one drop of our cold river, it is instructive to him beyond all our thought to see his God triumphing over pain and death in some sufferer in the fire of martyrdom, or in the torture of cancer, or in the shipwreck, or just in the silent awe of any form of our departure from the body . . . They see these fallen and mortal beings, this Community of the lost and saved, not only bearing and doing for God here on earth, but spiritually present with Him in the Holy of Holies above." (Moule)

v. Sometimes Christians get the crazy idea that God saved them and works in their life because they are somehow such great people. The angels see right through this. We might believe that it is because of us; the angels know better. We may think our lives are small and insignificant; the angels know better. We may doubt our high standing, seating in heavenly places; the angels see this spiritual reality with eyes wide open.

vi. "It is as if a great drama is being enacted. History is the theatre, the world is the stage, and the church members in every land are the actors. God himself has written the play, and he directs and produces it. Act by act, scene by scene, the story continues to unfold. But who are the audience?

They are the cosmic intelligences, *the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.*" (Stott)

vii. "The Angels are instructed in God's wisdom . . . by the fact of the great spiritual body, constituted in Christ, which they contemplate, and which is to them the *theatre of the glory of God.*" (Alford) "The history of the Christian church becomes a graduate school for angels." (Stott, quoting Mackay) c. **To the principalities and powers in the heavenly places:**

This means that angelic beings are *interested* and *instructed* by the lives of Christians. This is why the conduct of the church is so important: because angelic and demonic beings are looking on, and God's intent is to teach them through us. Several passages refer to this: · *For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.* (1Co_11:10) · *The things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven; things which angels desire to look into.* (1Pe_1:12)

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I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. (1Ti_5:21)

i. We should take this responsibility seriously, for angels are given the responsibility to carry souls to heaven at death (Luk_16:22) and are the reapers of the final harvest (Mat_13:39-43).

ii. "And, lastly, what think some of you, would angels say of *your* walk and conversation? Well, I suppose you don't care much about them, and yet you should. For who but angels will be the reapers at the last, and who but they shall be the convoy to our spirits across the last dark stream? Who but they shall carry our spirit like that of

Lazarus into the Father's bosom? Surely we should not despise them." (Spurgeon)

iii. "O be not, ye converts, ignorant of the word of God; be not oblivious of the operations of God in your own souls!

The angels desire to look into these things. Do you look into them?" (Spurgeon)

iv. A popular interpretation today sees the **principalities and powers** as modern political states and economic structures. The idea is that the church primarily is a witness to them, and should redeem governments and social structures through its witness. But Paul specifically wrote that these **principalities and powers** are **in the heavenly places**, not in earthly places.

d. **According to the eternal purpose which He accomplished:** The mystery reveals and furthers God's **eternal purpose** in Jesus, previously described in Eph_1:10 - that in the fullness of the times, God will gather together (essentially, to sum up or resolve) all things in Jesus.

i. The mystery of the unified Body of Christ is **according** to that purpose. It is a preview of what Jesus will ultimately do in the fulfillment of summing up all things in Himself.

ii. "The church thus appears to be God's pilot scheme for the reconciled universe of the future, the mystery of God's will *to be administered in the fullness of the times* when *the things in heaven and the things on earth* are brought together in Christ." (Bruce)

e. **Which He accomplished:** There is a sense in which Paul can say that this eternal purpose is already **accomplished**.

Its fulfillment is a certainty (as shown by the initial work of bringing Jew and Gentile together in Jesus), so he can speak of it as already finished.

f. **Through faith in Him:** The fact of this unity is shown by the truth that **we** (Jew and Gentile collectively) have the identical **boldness, access** and **confidence** before God - because it has nothing to do with national or ethnic identity, only with **faith in Him** (Jesus).

i. The word for **boldness** has the idea of “freedom of speech.” We have the freedom to express ourselves before God, without fear or shame. “The Greek word ‘parresia’ translated by ‘boldness’ means really ‘free speech’ - that is, the speaking of all. It is the blessed privilege of prayer.” (Gaebelin)

ii. Divisions in the church have not always been between Jew and Gentile. The Reformers spoke out against the division between “clergy” and “laity” and the teaching of the priesthood of all believers insisted that all had the same access to God.

4. (Eph_3:13) Paul’s current personal participation in the mystery.

Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

a. **Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart:** Though under arrest for the sake of the gospel, Paul asks his readers to not **lose heart**. Paul didn’t want them to be discouraged for *his* sake, because Paul was still being used in the service of God’s eternal plan.

b. **My tribulations for you:** Paul wrote the Letter to the Ephesians from prison, and it is useful to remember why Paul was in prison. He lived his whole life with the passion to bring salvation to his own people, the Jews (Rom_9:1-3). On a strategic visit to Jerusalem he had the opportunity to preach to a vast crowd on or near the temple mount (Act_21:39 to Act_22:22), but the opportunity ended in disaster because the Jewish crowd could not stand the idea of the good news of the Messiah being extended to the Gentiles (Act_22:21-22). The ensuing riot put Paul in a legal dilemma, from which he used his right as a Roman citizen and appealed to Caesar. Now Paul was imprisoned in Rome, waiting for his trial before Caesar - and there because he knew God wanted Gentiles to share in the good news of the Messiah, and he wasn’t afraid to preach that truth.

c. **Which is your glory:** Paul was being used, and probably in a greater way than he ever imagined. This Roman imprisonment produced the letters of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon. They all certainly have a place in God's eternal plan.

i. In the same manner, each of us has a place in the service of God's eternal plan. Knowing this and working towards it is a great guard against losing heart in the midst of tribulation.

B. Paul prays in light of the mystery.

1. (Eph_3:14-15) Introduction to the prayer.

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, a. **For this reason:** The basis of Paul's prayer was his knowledge of God's purpose. This means he confidently prayed according to God's will. We can't pray effectively if we do not have insight into God's purpose and will.

b. **I bow my knees:** Paul prayed in the posture of bowing his knees. This position of utmost humility was in contrast to the more normal posture of prayer in that culture, to pray standing with hands raised up.

i. The humility comes when he considers God's great eternal plan, his place in that plan, and how God's work is unstoppable even when Paul is imprisoned.

ii. Solomon prayed on his knees (1Ki_8:54). Ezra prayed on his knees (Ezr_9:5). The Psalmist called us to kneel (Psa_95:6). Daniel prayed on his knees (Dan_6:10). People came to Jesus kneeling (Mat_17:14, Mat_20:20, and Mar_1:40). Stephen prayed on his knees (Act_7:60). Peter prayed on his knees (Act_9:40). Paul prayed on his knees (Act_20:36), and other early Christians prayed on their knees (Act_21:5). Most importantly, Jesus prayed on His knees (Luk_22:41). The Bible has enough prayer *not* on the knees to show us that it isn't required, but it also has enough prayer *on* the knees to show us that it is good.

iii. Adam Clarke saw a connection between Solomon's kneeling prayer at the dedication of the temple and Paul's kneeling prayer here. "Many parts of this prayer bear a strict resemblance to that offered by Solomon when dedicating the temple . . . The apostle was now dedicating the Christian Church."

c. **To the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:** Paul directed his prayer to the **Father**, who is presented as the "planner" among the members of the Trinity. Prayer is usually directed to **the Father**, through the Son, by the empowering and direction of the Holy Spirit.

d. **From whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named:** In remembering that all God's family is called after His name, Paul showed that his mind was rather taken with this idea of the essential unity of the Body of Christ. God is Father of both Jew and Gentile.

i. Charles Spurgeon preached a touching sermon titled, *Saints in Heaven and Earth One Family*. In it he developed the idea that we are one with our brothers and sisters in heaven, and how this enriches our hope of heaven.

ii. Some commentators think Paul refers to heavenly families in the sense of families of angels. "May not the holy Angels be bound up in spiritual *families*, though they marry not nor are given in marriage?" (Alford) 2. (Eph_3:16-19) Paul prays again for the Ephesians.

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height; to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

a. **To be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man:** Paul asked that they would **be strengthened with might**, and that the strength would be

according to the riches of His glory (a most generous measure). He also prayed that the strength would come **through the Holy Spirit** and that it would be put into their **inner man**.

i. There is an **inner man** just as real as our physical body. We all understand the importance of strength in our physical body, but many are exceedingly weak in the **inner man**.

ii. **According to the riches of His glory**: “It would be a disgrace to a *king* or a *nobleman* to give no more than a *tradesman* or a *peasant*. God acts up to the dignity of his infinite perfections; he gives *according* to the *riches* of his *glory*.” (Clarke) b. **That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith**:

Paul asked that Jesus would live in these believers, even as Jesus promised in Joh_14:23 : *If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.*

i. Two ancient Greek words convey the idea “to live in.” One has the idea of living in a place as a stranger, and the other has the idea of settling down in a place to make it your permanent home. **Dwell** uses the ancient Greek word for a *permanent home*. Jesus wants to settle down in your heart, not just visit as a stranger.

ii. “Coming to them in a sense, in a respect, so deep and great, as to constitute a practically new arrival, and remaining where He so arrives not as a Guest, precariously detained, but as a Master resident in His proper home.”

(Moule)

iii. The glory of the indwelling Jesus is something for us to know, and to know by faith. It is there for us, but must be taken hold of **through faith**. “You have your Bible, and you have your knees; use them.” (Carr John Glynn, godfather to H. C. G. Moule)

iv. Why do we need spiritual strength to let Christ dwell within us? It is because there is something in us that *resists* the influence of the indwelling Jesus. That something can be conquered as the Spirit of God gives us the victory of

faith.

v. **Through faith** has the idea, “through your faith.” This is how Christ dwells in our heart. “The Indwelling is, from one side, the sovereign gift of God. From the other, it is a matter for the simplest and most personal reception by man. And then, the form of that reception is just this - faith; reliance, submissive trust; not animated action, not exalted aspiration, but acceptance.” (Moule)

c. **Being rooted and grounded in love:** Paul asked that all this would take place as they were **rooted and grounded in love**. The meaning seems to be that they should be rooted and grounded in their love for one another, more than being rooted and grounded in their love for God and the knowledge of that love.

i. “Two expressions are used: ‘rooted,’ like a living tree which lays hold upon the soil, twists itself round the rocks, and cannot be upturned: ‘grounded,’ like a building which has been settled, as a whole, and will never show any cracks or flaws in the future through failures in the foundation.” (Spurgeon)

d. **May be able to comprehend with all the saints:** Paul asked that they might be able to understand together, in community every dimension of the love of Jesus. Paul wanted them to know it by experience and not just in words.

i. “In this measurement may you and I be skilled. If we know nothing of mathematics, may we be well-tutored scholars in this spiritual geometry, and be able to comprehend the breadths and lengths of Jesu’s precious love.”

(Spurgeon)

e. **What is the width and length and depth and height:** This means that the love of Jesus has *dimensions* and that it can be *measured*.

i. “Alas, to a great many religious people the love of Jesus is not a solid substantial thing at all -it is a beautiful fiction, a

sentimental belief, a formal theory, but to Paul it was a real, substantial, measurable fact; he had considered it this way, and that way, and the other way, and it was evidently real to him, whatever it might be to others.” (Spurgeon)

ii. The love of Jesus has **width**. You can see how wide a river is by noticing how much it covers over. God’s river of love is so wide that it covers over my sin, and it covers over every circumstance of my life, so that all things work together for good. When I doubt His forgiveness or His providence, I am narrowing the mighty river of God’s love.

His love is as wide as the world: *For God so loved the world* (Joh_3:16)

iii. “Some of them seem to be so taken up with the height and length that they deny the breadth, and you would think from hearing them preach that Christ came into the world to save half-a-dozen, and that they were five of them . . . Out on their narrowness! There will be more in heaven than we expect to see there by a long way; and there will be some there with whom we had very little comfortable fellowship on earth who had fellowship with Christ, and who are therefore taken to dwell with him for ever.” (Spurgeon)

iv. The love of Jesus has **length**. When considering the length of God’s love, ask yourself “When did the love of God start towards me? How long will it continue?” These truths measure the *length* of God’s love. *Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love* (Jer_31:3) v. The love of Jesus has **depth**.

Php_2:7-8 tell us how deep the love of Jesus goes: *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.* You can’t go lower than *the death of the cross*, and that is how deep the love of Jesus is for us.

vi. The love of Jesus has **height**. To see the height of God's love, ask yourself, "How high does it lift me?" It lifts me to heavenly places where I am seated with Christ. He has *raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus* (Eph_2:6).

vii. Can we really **comprehend** the **width and length and depth and height** of God's love? To come to any understanding of the dimensions of God's love, we must come to the cross. The cross pointed in four ways, essentially in every direction, because . . .

- God's love is wide enough to include every person.
- God's love is long enough to last through all eternity.
- God's love is deep enough to reach the worst sinner.
- God's love is high enough to take us to heaven.

f. **To know the love of Christ:** Paul wrote of something we can *know*. This isn't speculation, guesswork, emotions, or feelings. This is something to **know**.

i. "One of these philosophers kindly says that religion is a matter of belief; not of knowledge. This is clean in opposition to all the teaching of Scripture." (Spurgeon)

g. **That you may be filled with all the fullness of God:** Paul asked God to fill these Christians *unto all the fullness of God*. The word *unto* is a better translation than the word **with**. Paul wanted Christians to experience life in Jesus Christ, the fullness of God (Col_2:9), and to be filled to their capacity with Jesus, even as God is filled to His own capacity with His own character and attributes.

i. "Among all the great sayings in this prayer, this is the greatest. To be FILLED *with God* is a great thing; to be *filled with the FULLNESS of God* is still greater; but to be *filled with ALL the fullness of God* utterly bewilders the sense and confounds the understanding." (Clarke) 3. (Eph_3:20-21) A glorious doxology.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in

us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

a. **Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think:** As Paul came to this great height (what can there be higher than the *fullness of God?*), it is logical to ask how this can ever be. How can something so far above us ever become reality? It can only happen because God is able to do far beyond what **we ask or think**.

i. This doxology does not only belong to the prayer that precedes it, but also to every glorious privilege and blessing spoken of the first three chapters. Who **is able to** bring such things to pass? Only God can do this, because He can do far beyond our ability to think or ask.

ii. Paul says that God is able to do above all that *we* ask or think. The *we* includes Paul and the other apostles - and they certainly knew that Jesus could do great things.

- You can ask for every good thing you have ever experienced - God can do **above** that.

- You can think of or imagine things beyond your experience - God can do **above** that.

- You can imagine good things that are beyond your ability to name - God can do **above** that.

iii. Spurgeon on the phrase **exceedingly abundantly**: "He has constructed here in the Greek an expression which is altogether his own. No language was powerful enough for the apostle, - I mean for the Holy Ghost speaking through the apostle, - for very often Paul has to coin words and phrases to shadow forth his meaning, and here is one, 'He is able to do exceeding abundantly,' so abundantly that it exceeds measure and description." (Spurgeon)

iv. "Therefore he is able to do all things, and able to do *superabundantly above the greatest abundance*." (Clarke)

b. **According to the power that works in us:** God is able to do this in our life now, not beginning with heaven. This **power . . . works in us** now.

i. The things Paul prayed for in the previous verses (spiritual strength, the indwelling Jesus, experiential knowledge of God's love, and the fullness of God) belong to us as children of God. However, they must be received by believing prayer and can be furthered in the lives of others by our prayers for them.

c. **To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus:** The only fitting response to this great God is to give Him glory - especially in the church, the company of His redeemed, and that He receive that glory **throughout all ages, world without end** - Amen!

i. When the church understands and walks in God's eternal purpose, God will be glorified and the church will fulfill its important duty of simply glorifying God.

ii. "But the apostle felt that he must not say, 'Unto him be glory in my soul.' He wished that, but his one soul afforded far too little space, and so he cried 'unto him, be glory *in the church*.' He calls upon all the people of God to praise the divine name." (Spurgeon) (Eph 3:2) if indeed² you have heard of the stewardship³ of God's grace that was given to me for you,

(Eph 3:3) that⁴ by revelation the divine secret⁵ was made known to me, as I wrote before briefly.⁶

(Eph 3:4) When reading this,⁷ you will be able to⁸ understand my insight into this secret⁹ of Christ.

(Eph 3:5) Now this secret¹⁰ was not disclosed to people¹¹ in former¹² generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by¹³ the Spirit, (Eph 3:6) namely, that through the gospel¹⁴ the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members¹⁵ of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus.

(Eph 3:7) I became a servant of this gospel¹⁶ according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by¹⁷ the exercise of his power.¹⁸

(Eph 3:8) To me — less than the least of all the saints¹⁹ — this grace was given,²⁰ to proclaim to the Gentiles the

unfathomable riches of Christ (Eph 3:9) and to enlighten²¹ everyone about God's secret plan²² — a secret that has been hidden for ages²³ in God²⁴ who has created all things. (Eph 3:10) The purpose of this enlightenment is that²⁵ through the church the multifaceted wisdom²⁶ of God should now be disclosed to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms.

(Eph 3:11) This was according to²⁷ the eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

(Eph 3:12) in whom we have boldness and confident access²⁸ to God²⁹ because of³⁰ Christ's³¹ faithfulness.³²

(Eph 3:13) For this reason I ask you³³ not to lose heart because of what I am suffering for you,³⁴ which³⁵ is your glory.³⁶

(Eph 3:14) ***Prayer for Strengthened Love***

For this reason³⁷ I kneel³⁸ before the Father,³⁹

(Eph 3:15) from⁴⁰ whom every family⁴¹ in heaven and on the earth is named.

(Eph 3:16) I pray that⁴² according to the wealth of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, (Eph 3:17) that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, so that, because you have been rooted and grounded in love, (Eph 3:18) you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,⁴³

(Eph 3:19) and thus to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled up to⁴⁴ all the fullness of God.

(Eph 3:20) Now to him who by the power that is working within us⁴⁵ is able to do far beyond⁴⁶ all that we ask or think, (Eph 3:21) to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

(Eph 4:1) ***Live in Unity***

I, therefore, the prisoner for the Lord,¹ urge you to live² worthily of the calling with which you have been called,³ (Guzik)

Eph 4:1-32

Ephesians 4 - LIVING TO GOD'S GLORY

A. A call for unity among God's people.

1. (Eph_4:1) The foundation for all exhortation.

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,

a. **Therefore:** Paul spent three chapters spelling out in glorious detail all that God did for us, freely by His grace. Now he brings a call to live rightly, but only *after* explaining what God did for us.

b. **Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called:** When we really understand how much God did for us, we will naturally want to serve and obey Him out of gratitude.

i. Understanding *who we are* is the foundation of this worthy walk. "Luther counsels men to answer all temptations of Satan with this only, *Christianus sum*, I am a Christian." (Trapp)

ii. The idea is clear. We don't walk worthy *so that* God will love us, but *because* He does love us. It is motivated out of gratitude, not out of a desire to earn merit.

iii. "Every believer is God's first-born; and so higher than the kings of the earth, Psa_89:27. He must therefore carry himself accordingly, and not stain his high blood." (Trapp)

2. (Eph_4:2-3) The character of a worthy walk.

With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

a. **With all lowliness and gentleness:** A worthy walk before God will be marked by **lowliness and gentleness**, not a pushy desire to defend our own rights and advance our own agenda.

i. Before Christianity, the word **lowliness** always had a bad association to it. In the minds of many, it still does, but it is a glorious Christian virtue (Php_2:1-10). It means that we can be happy and content when we are not in control or steering things our way.

b. **Longsuffering, bearing with one another:** We need this so that the inevitable wrongs that occur between people in God's family will not work against God's purpose of bringing all things together in Jesus - illustrated through His current work in the church.

i. Chrysostom defined **longsuffering** as the spirit that has the power to take revenge, but never does. It is characteristic of a forgiving, generous heart.

c. **Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace:** This humble, forgiving attitude towards each other naturally fulfills this gift of the **unity of the Spirit**.

i. We must *endeavor to keep* this unity - we do not create it. God never commands us to create unity among believers. He has created it by His Spirit; our duty is to recognize it and keep it.

ii. This is a spiritual unity, not necessarily a structural or denominational unity. It is evident in the quick fellowship possible among Christians of different races, nationalities, languages, and economic classes.

iii. We can understand this **unity of the Spirit** by understanding what it *is not*. In a sermon on this text, Charles Spurgeon pointed out some of the things that the text does *not* say.

- It does not say, "To endeavor to maintain the unity of evil, the unity of superstition, or the unity of spiritual tyranny."

- It does not say, "Endeavoring to keep up your ecclesiastical arrangements for centralization."

- It does not say, "Endeavoring to keep the uniformity of the Spirit."

iv. Structural unity can even work *against* true **unity of the Spirit**. We can perhaps see a purpose God has in preventing a structural unity of the church right now, to keep misdirected efforts of the church (such as ambitions for political power) from fulfillment. “It is not a desirable thing that all Churches should melt into one another and become one; for the complete fusion of all Churches into one ecclesiastical corporation would inevitably produce another form of Popery, since history teaches us that large ecclesiastical bodies grow more or less corrupt as a matter of course. Huge spiritual corporations are, as a whole, the strongholds of tyranny and the refuges of abuse; and it is only a matter of time when they shall break to pieces.” (Spurgeon)

v. “For the church fellowship in the Gentile and Jewish believers were united was no mere enrollment on a register of membership; it involved their union with Christ by faith and therefore their union with each other as fellow-members of his body.” (Bruce)

vi. We are confident that this unity is found in Jesus Christ, by the Spirit of God. “We want unity in the truth of God through the Spirit of God. This let us seek after; let us live near to Christ, for this is the best way of promoting unity. Divisions in Churches never begin with those full of love to the Savior.” (Spurgeon)

3. (Eph_4:4-6) The description of the unity of the Church.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

a. **There is one body and one Spirit**: We have unity because of what we share in common. In Jesus we share one **body**, one **Spirit**, one **hope** of our **calling**, one **Lord**, one **faith**, one **baptism**, and one **Father**. Each of these common areas is greater than any potential difference.

b. **One baptism:** Some think that because Paul says there is **one baptism** that the idea of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a subsequent experience is invalid. But Paul only spoke here of the baptism by water which is the visible token of God's common work in every believer, and thus a basis of unity. There aren't separate baptisms for Jew and Gentile.

i. The concept of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is spoken of clearly in Mat_3:11, Act_1:5; Act_11:16. This may be considered an initial (and sometimes dramatic) experience one has with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, a filling that God wants to continue through a person's Christian life.

B. The way God works unity: through spiritual gifts of leadership in the church.

1. (Eph_4:7-10) The giving of spiritual gifts to the church.

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." (Now this, "He ascended"; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) a. **Grace was given:** We all have **grace** given to us **according to the measure** of Jesus' **gift**. This is basis for God's distribution of spiritual gifts through His church: **grace**, the free, unmerited giving of God. No one deserves or has earned spiritual gifts.

b. **When He ascended on high:** This giving happened (as described prophetically in Psa_68:18) when Jesus **ascended** to heaven, evidence of His triumph over every foe (the leading of **captivity captive**).

i. Bruce on the picture from Psalms 68 : "One may picture a military leader returning to Jerusalem at the head of his followers, after routing an enemy army and taking many prisoners."

ii. As Jesus said, *It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I*

depart, I will send Him to you. (Joh_16:7)

c. **When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men:** Paul does not quote the passage exactly as it appears in Psalms 68. Either he altered it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit or under similar inspiration he quotes from an ancient translation (called a Targum) that quotes the Psalm in this manner.

i. Psa_68:18 reads: *You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men.* There is certainly enough room in the language of the original Hebrew to *allow* Paul's reading, even though it is unusual.

ii. "It is enough for me that the apostle, under the inspiration of God, applied the verse in this way; and whatever David might intend, and of whatever event he might have written, we see plainly that the sense in which the apostle uses it was the sense of the Spirit of God." (Clarke)

d. **Now this, "He ascended"; what does it mean:** In this, Paul demonstrates how the words **He ascended** in Psa_68:18 have reference to the resurrection of Jesus, speaking first of His rising from **the lower parts of the earth**, and secondly of His ascension **far above all the heavens**.

i. Some think that the phrase **lower parts of the earth** refers to Jesus' preaching *to the spirits in prison* described in 1Pe_3:19 and 1Pe_4:6. While this aspect of Jesus' ministry in Hades following His work on the cross is true (and prophesied in Isa_61:1-2 and Luk_4:18), Paul did not *necessarily* refer to it here.

2. (Eph_4:11-12) The offices of spiritual leadership in the church and their purpose.

And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, a. **He Himself:** This means that Jesus established these offices. They are the work and appointment of Jesus, not men.

Though pretenders may lay claim to them, the offices themselves are a Divine institution and not a human invention.

b. **Gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers:** Paul describes four offices (not five, as in the commonly yet erroneously termed “five-fold ministry”).

i. **Apostles**, who are special ambassadors of God’s work, though not in the same authoritative sense of the first century apostles. They were used to provide a foundation (preserved as the New Testament) as described in Eph_2:20.

ii. **Prophets**, who speak forth words from God in total consistency with the foundation of the Old and New Testaments. Sometimes they speak in a predictive sense, but not necessarily so, and they are always subject to the discernment and judgment of the church leadership (1Co_14:29). As with the **apostles**, modern **prophets** do not speak in the same authoritative sense that the first century prophets brought God’s foundational word (Eph_2:20).

iii. **Evangelists**, who are specifically gifted to preach the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

iv. **Pastors and teachers** (or, *pastor-teachers*; the ancient Greek clearly describes one office with two descriptive titles), who shepherd the flock of God primarily (though not exclusively) through teaching the Word of God.

“Teaching is an essential part of the pastoral ministry; it is appropriate, therefore, that the two terms, *pastors and teachers*, should be joined together to denote one order of ministry.” (Bruce)

v. These gifts are given at the discretion of Jesus, working through the Holy Spirit (1Co_12:11). The importance of having “all four in operation” in any church body is up to Jesus who appoints the offices. The job of responsible

church leadership is to not hinder or prevent such ministry, but never to “promote it into existence.”

c. **For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry:** The purpose of these gifts of leadership is also clear. It is that **saints** (God’s people) might be *equipped for the work of ministry* (service), so that the **body of Christ** would be built up (expanded and strengthened).

i. **Equipping** also has the idea of “to put right.” It was used for setting broken bones, and for mending nets. These ministries work together to produce strong, mended, fit Christians.

ii. God’s people do the real **work of ministry**. Leaders in the church have the first responsibility to equip people to serve and to direct their service as God leads.

iii. “The primary purpose of the Church isn’t to convert sinners to Christianity, but to *perfect* (complete and mature) the saints for the ministry and edification of the Body.” (Smith)

3. (Eph_4:13-16) The desired goal of God’s work through church leadership and equipped saints.

Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head; Christ; from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

a. **Till we all come to the unity of the faith:** This is the first goal of God’s work through the gifted offices and equipped saints. This is consistent with both the ultimate purpose of God (Eph_1:10) and the mystery of God revealed through Paul (Eph_3:6).

i. Again, by clearly stating that this is a **unity of the *faith***, Paul does not command a structural or organizational unity, but a spiritual unity around a common faith.

b. **And of the knowledge of the Son of God:** When the gifted offices work right and the saints are properly equipped, there are increased maturity and greater intimacy in our experience of God.

c. **To a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:** The gifted offices and equipped saints bring the saints to maturity, according to the **measure** of Jesus Himself. As years pass by, we should not only grow *old* in Jesus, but *more mature* in Him as well, as both individuals and as a corporate body.

d. **We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine:** The gifted offices and equipped saints result in stability, being firmly planted on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph_2:20).

i. Those who do not mature in this way are targets of deceivers, who are effective precisely because they operate with **trickery** and **cunning craftiness** - and they **lie in wait to deceive**. They are out there like land mines that the mature can avoid.

ii. The ancient Greek word for **tossed to and fro** is from the same words used to describe the stormy sea of Galilee in Luk_8:24 (*raging of the water*). We can wrongly value *movement* over *growth*; mere movement is being tossed to and fro, but God wants us to **grow up in all things**.

iii. **By the trickery of men:** "The words . . . refer to the arts used by gamblers, who employ false *dice* that will always throw up one kind of number, which is that by which those who play with them cannot win." (Clarke) Running after spiritual fads always leaves one a loser.

e. **Speaking the truth in love:** This speaks to not only how we are to relate to one another in God's family, but also to how leaders and saints are to deal with deceivers. We

should deal with them in **love**, but never budging from the **truth**.

f. May grow up in all things into Him who is the head:

Another way maturity is described is as the growing up into Jesus, who is the head. Again, this defines the *direction* of maturity. We never grow “independent” of Jesus, we grow up **into Him**.

i. “A church that is only united in itself, but not united to Christ, is no living church at all. You may attain to the unity of the frost-bound earth in which men and women are frozen together with the cold proprieties of aristocracy, but it is not the unity of life.” (Spurgeon)

ii. Clarke on **grow up into him**: “This is a continuance of a metaphor taken from the members of a human body receiving nourishment equally and growing up, each in its due proportion to other parts, and to the body in general.”

g. According to the effective working by which every part does its share: The evidence of maturity - that the leaders and the saints are all doing their job - is this **effective working**. This means every part and joint provides what it can supply in a coordinated effort. When this happens, it naturally causes the **growth of the body** (both in size and strength), but especially growth for building itself up **in love**.

i. Some people think of the church as a pyramid, with the pastor at the top. Others think of the church as a bus driven by the pastor, who takes his passive passengers where they should go. But God wants us to see the church as

a body, where **every part does its share**.

C. Putting off the old man, putting on the new man.

1. (Eph_4:17-19) The character of the old man.

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being

alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

a. **Therefore:** This makes the connection, not only with the glorious spiritual privileges laid out in Ephesians 1 through 3, but also with the high call of a unified, mature body as described in Eph_4:1-6. Because of this high calling, we should **walk** (conduct our life) in a different manner than the world around us does.

i. There is a constant tendency for Christians to display to the world that we really aren't so different after all. This is usually a misguided effort to gain the world's "respect" or approval. This must be resisted at all costs, because the goal in itself is both undesirable and unachievable.

ii. This principle of compromise can be illustrated by the exchange between a liberal scholar theologian and a Christian professor. The liberal agrees, "I'll call you a scholar if you'll call me a Christian." The trade isn't worth it.

b. **No longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk:** The Gentile **walk** is characterized by **the futility of their mind**. In the end, their thinking is futile because their **understanding is darkened** - because they are **alienated from the life of God**.

i. This is not to say that man, in his rebellion against God, is not capable of mighty intellectual achievements. But it is to say that all such achievements fall short of true wisdom, because *the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom* (Pro_9:10).

ii. **Futility:** "The thought is not that unregenerate minds are empty. It is that they are filled with things that lead to nothing." (Vaughan) iii. As Christians, we have a proper way and place to **walk**. It is as if Jesus turned us around and put us in the right direction, and now we have to **walk** and progress in that direction.

c. **Because of the blindness of their heart:**

Fundamentally, the **ignorance** and lack of understanding of man is a **heart** problem. It is shown not only in a foolish denial of God, but also in their moral failures (**licentiousness, uncleanness, greediness**).

i. The **Gentiles** Paul speaks of were either atheists or they believed in gods who were themselves immoral.

Therefore in their denial of the true God, they denied any standard of morality that they must answer to.

ii. **Past feeling** has the idea of one's skin becoming callous and no longer sensitive to pain. It is the logical result of **the blindness of their heart**. **Blindness** can also be understood here as *hardening*, and this ancient Greek word "is used medically to denote the callus formed when a bone has been fractured and reset. Such a callus is even harder than the bone itself." (Wood)

iii. **Licentiousness** is sin that flaunts itself, throwing off all restraint and having no sense of shame or fear; **uncleanness** is a broad word, mostly with reference to sexual impropriety.

iv. Barclay elaborates on the Greek word *aselgeia*, translated **licentiousness**: “The great characteristic of *aselgeia* is this - the bad man usually tries to hide his sin; but the man who has *aselgeia* in his soul does not care how much he shocks public opinion so long as he can gratify his desires.” (Barclay) 2. (Eph_4:20-24) Putting on the new man.

But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

a. **Put off . . . the old man . . . put on the new man:** This has the same idea of putting off or putting on a set of clothes. The idea is to “change into” a different kind of **conduct**.

i. Think of a prisoner who is released from prison, but still wears his prison clothes and acts like a prisoner, not a free man. The first thing you would tell that person is “put on some new clothes.”

ii. Even as putting on different clothes will change the way you think about yourself and see yourself, even so putting on different conduct will start to change your attitudes. This means that we shouldn’t wait to *feel* like the **new man** before we **put on the new man**.

iii. Fundamentally, Paul says that for the Christian, there must be a break with the past. Jesus isn’t merely *added* to our old life; the old life dies and He becomes our new life.

b. **You have not so learned Christ:** The repetition of this idea shows that putting on the new man has a strong aspect

of *learning* and *education* to it. **You have *heard* Him and have been *taught* by Him, as the *truth* is in Jesus . . . and be renewed in the spirit of your *mind*.**

i. Our Christian life must go beyond head knowledge, but it must absolutely include head knowledge and affect our whole manner of thinking. Not just in the sense of knowing facts, but the ability to set our minds on the right things. This is so fundamental to the Christian life that Christian growth can even be described as *the renewing of your mind* (Rom_12:2).

ii. The Ephesians **learned Christ**, not only learning *about* Jesus, but also learning *Him*. This means a living, abiding knowledge of Jesus will keep us from the kind of sinful conduct Paul speaks of. Just knowing *about* Jesus isn't enough to keep us pure.

i. "So, if you want to know the Lord Jesus Christ, you must live with him. First he must himself speak to you, and afterwards you must abide in him. He must be the choice Companion of your morning hours, he must be with you throughout the day, and with him you must also close the night; and as often as you may wake during the night, you must say, 'When I awake, I am still with thee.'" (Spurgeon)

c. **Put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness:** The new man is the *new creation* (2Co_5:17) created in us at conversion. It is the person created according to the image of Jesus Christ and instinctively righteous and holy. It is in contrast to the old man, who is the person inherited from Adam and instinctively rebels against God.

3. (Eph_4:25-32) The conduct of the new man.

Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one *of you* speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give

him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

a. **Therefore, putting away lying:** The new man tells the truth. The motive for doing this is because we are **members of one another**, therefore there is no place for lying.

i. A body can only function properly if it tells itself the truth. If your hand touches something hot but your hand tells your brain that the thing is cool, your hand will be severely burned. That's why telling the truth is so important, because **we are members of one another**.

b. **Be angry, and do not sin:** The new man may get **angry**, but he does not sin. The new man knows how to let go of his **wrath**, thus giving no opportunity **to the devil**.

i. "Here it is suggested that anger can be prevented from degenerating into sin if a strict time limit is placed on it: *do not let the sun set on your anger.*" (Bruce) "He that will be angry and not sin, let him be angry at nothing but sin." (Trapp)

ii. The devil's work is to accuse and divide the family of God, and to sow discord among them. When we harbor anger in our heart, we do the devil's work for him.

iii. The name **devil** literally means "slanderer." Paul may be saying that when we hold on to our anger, creating bitterness, we give place to the slanderer - either because we become one or because we provoke their slander.

c. **Let him who stole steal no longer:** The new man does not **steal**, but he works **with his hands**. He does this not only to provide for his own needs, but also to **have something to give him who has need**.

i. **Let him labor: Labor** is literally “to exert himself to the point of exhaustion.” This is the kind of working heart God commands those who used to steal to have. Paul’s idea is that we should work so that we can give. The purpose for getting becomes giving.

d. **Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth:** The new man knows how to watch his tongue, speaking only **what is good for necessary edification**, desiring to **impart grace** to all who hear him.

i. **Corrupt communication:** “Not only obscene vulgarity but slanderous and contemptuous talk.” (Bruce) e. **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God:** The new man will not **grieve the Holy Spirit**, knowing that He is our seal both in the sense of identification and protection.

i. There are many ways to grieve the Holy Spirit. We can neglect holiness and grieve the *Holy Spirit*. We can think in purely materialistic terms and grieve the *Holy Spirit*. The Spirit exalts Jesus (Joh_15:26); when we fail to do the same, we grieve the Spirit.

ii. “I think I now see the Spirit of God grieving, when you are sitting down to read a novel and there is your Bible unread. Perhaps you take down some book of travels, and you forget that you have got a more precious book of travels in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the story of your blessed Lord and Master. You have no time for prayer, but the Spirit sees you very active about worldly things, and having many hours to spare for relaxation and amusement. And then he is grieved because he sees that you love worldly things better than you love him.”

(Spurgeon)

iii. “Although the word ‘grieve’ is a painful one, yet there is honey in the rock; for it is an inexpressibly delightful thought, that he who rules heaven and earth, and is the creator of all things, and the infinite and ever blessed God, condescends to enter into such infinite relationships with his people that his divine mind may be affected by their

actions. What a marvel that Deity should be said to grieve over the faults of beings so utterly insignificant as we are!" (Spurgeon)

iv. "Sin everywhere must be displeasing to the Spirit of holiness, but sin in his own people is grievous to him in the highest degree. He will not hate his people, but he does hate their sins, and hates them all the more because they nestle in his children's bosoms. The Spirit would not be the Spirit of truth if he could approve of that which is false in us: he would not be pure if that which is impure in us did not grieve him." (Spurgeon)

v. The Holy Spirit's grief is not of a petty, oversensitive nature. "He is grieved with us mainly for our own sakes, for he knows what misery sin will cost us; he reads our sorrows in our sins . . . He grieves over us because he sees how much chastisement we incur, and how much communion we lose." (Spurgeon)

f. **Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you:** The new man has control of his emotions (**bitterness, wrath, anger** and so forth). When such things do emerge, he is able to deal with them in a manner glorifying to God.

i. Aristotle defined **bitterness** as "the resentful spirit that refuses reconciliation."

ii. **Wrath** speaks of an outburst of the moment; **anger** speaks of a settled disposition. Both must be **put away**.

g. **And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another:** The new man seeks to show the same kindness, tender heartedness and forgiveness to others that God shows him. If we treat others as God treats us, we fulfill every thing Paul told us to do in this chapter.

h. **Just as God in Christ forgave you:** Our forgiveness to others is patterned after the forgiveness of Jesus towards us. When we think of the amazing way God forgives us, it is shameful for us to withhold forgiveness from those who have wronged us.

- God holds back His anger a long time until He forgives. He bears with us long though we sorely provoke Him.
 - God reaches out to bad people to woo them to Himself, and attempts reconciliation with bad people.
 - God always makes the first move in forgiveness, trying to reconcile even though the guilty party is uninterested in forgiveness
 - God forgives our sin knowing that we will sin again, often in exactly the same way.
 - God's forgiveness is so complete and glorious that He grants adoption to those former offenders.
 - God, in His forgiveness, bore *all* the penalty for the wrong we did against Him.
 - God keeps reaching out to man for reconciliation even when man rejects Him again and again.
 - God requires no probationary period to receive His forgiveness.
 - God's forgiveness offers complete restoration and honor. He loves, adopts, honors, and associates those who once wronged Him.
 - God puts His trust in us and invites us to work with Him as co-laborers when He forgives us
- i. The older King James Version puts it like this: *even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*. This gives us an assurance of forgiveness - that it is *for Christ's sake*. "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven thee. Get hold of that grand truth, and hold it, though all the devils in hell roar at thee. Grasp it as with a hand of steel; grip it as for life: 'God for Christ's sake hath forgiven me,' - may each one of us be able to say that. We shall not feel the divine sweetness and force of the text unless we can make a personal matter of it by the Holy Ghost." (Spurgeon)
- ii. "If anyone here who is a Christian finds a difficulty in forgiveness, I am going to give him three words which will help him wonderfully. I would put them into the good man's mouth. I gave them to you just now, and prayed you to get the sweetness of them; here

they are again! 'For Christ's sake.' Cannot you forgive an offender on that ground?"

(Spurgeon)

iii. It isn't that we must forgive because Jesus *will* forgive us. We forgive because He *has* forgiven us. "It is the historical fact of Christ once for all putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, which is alluded to." (Moule) (Eph 4:2) with all humility and gentleness,⁴ with patience, bearing with⁵ one another in love,

(Eph 4:3) making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

(Eph 4:4) There is one body and one Spirit, just as you too were called to the one hope of your calling, (Eph 4:5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

(Eph 4:6) one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

(Eph 4:7) But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

(Eph 4:8) Therefore it says, "**When he ascended on high he captured 6 captives; he gave gifts to men.**"⁷

(Eph 4:9) Now what is the meaning of " **he ascended**," except that he also descended⁸ to the lower regions,⁹ namely, the earth?¹⁰

(Eph 4:10) He, the very one¹¹ who descended, is also the one who ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill all things.

(Eph 4:11) It was he¹² who gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,¹³

(Eph 4:12) to equip¹⁴ the saints for the work of ministry, that is,¹⁵ to build up the body of Christ,

(Eph 4:13) until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God — a mature person, attaining to¹⁶ the measure of Christ's full stature.¹⁷

(Eph 4:14) So¹⁸ we are no longer to be children, tossed back and forth by waves and carried about by every wind of

teaching by the trickery of people who craftily carry out their deceitful schemes.¹⁹

(Eph 4:15) But practicing the truth in love,²⁰ we will in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head.

(Eph 4:16) From him the whole body grows, fitted and held together²¹ through every supporting ligament.²² As each one does its part, the body grows in love.

(Eph 4:17) ***Live in Holiness***

So I say this, and insist²³ in the Lord, that you no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility²⁴ of their thinking.²⁵

(Eph 4:18) They are darkened in their understanding,²⁶ being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of their hearts.

(Eph 4:19) Because they are callous, they have given themselves over to indecency for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.²⁷

(Eph 4:20) But you did not learn about Christ like this,

(Eph 4:21) if indeed you heard about him and were taught in him, just as the truth is in Jesus.

(Eph 4:22) You were taught with reference to your former way of life to lay aside²⁸ the old man who is being corrupted in accordance with deceitful desires, (Eph 4:23) to be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

(Eph 4:24) and to put on the new man who has been created in God's image²⁹ — in righteousness and holiness that comes from truth.³⁰

(Eph 4:25) Therefore, having laid aside falsehood, ***each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor,*** ³¹ for we are members of one another.

(Eph 4:26) ***Be angry and do not sin;*** ³² do not let the sun go down on the cause of your anger.³³

(Eph 4:27) Do not give the devil an opportunity.

(Eph 4:28) The one who steals must steal no longer; rather he must labor, doing good with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with the one who has need.

(Eph 4:29) You must let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth, but only what is beneficial for the building up of the one in need,³⁴ that it may give grace to those who hear.

(Eph 4:30) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

(Eph 4:31) You must put away every kind of bitterness, anger, wrath, quarreling, and evil, slanderous talk.

(Eph 4:32) Instead,³⁵ be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.³⁶

(Eph 5:1) ***Live in Love***

Therefore, be¹ imitators of God as dearly loved children
(Guzik)

Eph 5:1-33

Ephesians 5 - LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

A. Forsaking the darkness.

1. (Eph_5:1-2) Walking in love.

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

a. **Therefore:** Here, Paul concludes the thought from Ephesians 4, where he described how Christians should relate to one another.

b. **Be imitators of God:** The idea is simple - that we are to make *God* our example and model. We can't content ourselves comparing us among men. We must heed the idea of 1Pe_1:15-16 : *as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."*

i. It does not say, "Think about God" or "Admire God" or "Adore God," though those are all important Christian duties. This is a call to practical action, going beyond our inner life with God.

ii. We could say this is a continuation of the same idea Paul mentioned in Eph_4:13 regarding the extent of Christian

growth: *to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.* We could also say that this is a continuation of the idea from Eph_4:32, where we were commanded to be *forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.* God's behavior towards us becomes our measure for our behavior towards one another.

iii. It is important to see that God *is far more than our example.* Many errors come into the church when Jesus is presented *only* as an example of behavior. We are not *saved* by the example of Jesus, but *once saved* His example is meaningful to us. God is *more* than our example, but He is *also* our example.

c. **As dear children:** Children are natural imitators. They often do just what they see their parents or other adults do. When we act according to our nature as children of God, we will imitate Him.

i. As we do imitate God, we become representatives of God, especially before those who have shut God out of their life. "What are we sent into the world for? Is it not that we may keep men in mind of God, whom they are most anxious to forget? If we are imitators of God, as dear children, they will be compelled to recollect that there is a God, for they will see his character reflected in ours. I have heard of an atheist who said he could get over every argument except the example of his godly mother: he could never answer that." (Spurgeon)

d. **Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us:** As in all things, Jesus is our example. As He **has loved us and** has **given Himself for us**, we are to display the same kind of self-giving love.

e. **An offering and a sacrifice:** Jesus' giving of Himself was obviously a sacrifice pleasing to the Father. We can also offer a pleasing sacrifice (**a sweet-smelling aroma**) as we give ourselves in love to others.

i. We often think we could lay down our life in a dramatic way to show our love for others. But God often calls us to lay

down our lives little by little - in small coins instead of one large payment - but it is laying down our lives nonetheless.

ii. Adam Clarke on **an offering**: “An oblation, an eucharistic offering; the same as *minchah*, Lev_2:1 and following, which is explained to be *an offering made unto the Lord, of fine flour, with oil and frankincense*. It means, any offering by which *gratitude* was expressed for temporal blessings received from the *bounty* of God.”

iii. Adam Clarke on **a sacrifice**: “A *sin-offering*, a *victim for sin*; the same as *zebach*, which almost universally means that sacrificial act in which the blood of an *animal* was poured out as an atonement for sin. These terms may be justly considered as including every kind of *sacrifice*, *offering*, and *oblation* made to God on any account.”

2. (Eph_5:3-4) A contrast to walking in love: conduct not fitting for the Christian.

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

a. **Let it not even be named among you**: Paul groups together these ideas of sexual sin and impropriety, indicating that none of these are **fitting for saints** and should not even **be named among** God’s people.

i. Paul uses a comprehensive list of sexual sins:

.

Fornication (*porneia*), a broad word describing sexual sin .

Uncleanness, another broad word for “dirty” moral behavior, especially in a sexual sense .

Filthiness, which has much the same as **uncleanness**

.

Coarse jesting, which has the idea of inappropriate, “dirty” sexual humor

ii. We must notice the theme of the moral appeal. It isn’t “avoid these things so that you can be a saint.” Rather, it is “you are a saint; now live in a manner fitting for a saint.” The constant moral appeal of the New Testament is simply this: *be who you are in Jesus*.

b. **As is fitting for saints**: This emphasis on sexual sin was appropriate. The culture of Paul’s day (and in the city of Ephesus especially) was given over to sexual immorality. The sort of behavior Paul says is not **fitting for saints** was pretty much completely approved by the culture. It’s just the same way today.

c. **Covetousness . . . foolish talking**: Paul also included **covetousness** and **foolish talking** in this list because of their close association with sexual sin. The desire to have something that doesn’t belong to us and foolish speaking have led many people into sexual sin. But **covetousness** and **foolish talking** also have relevance *beyond* their relation to sexual sin.

i. **Foolish talking** is literally “an easy turn of speech.” In the context, the idea is of the one who can turn every conversation into a joking comment on sexual matters, usually with a double-entendre.

d. **But rather giving of thanks**: Positively, the Christian is to give **thanks** for sex. We receive it thankfully as a gift, and we enjoy sex in a way that glorifies the Giver.

i. God’s purpose in giving sex is not primarily for the gratification of the individual, but for the bonding together of husband and wife in a one-flesh relationship. Certain expressions of sexuality are sin *not because* God wants to deprive some aspect of enjoyment, but because they work against His primary purpose for sex.

3. (Eph_5:5-7) The consequences of conduct not fitting for Christians.

For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.

a. **Has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God:** The people mentioned in Eph_5:3 (the **fornicator** , the **unclean person** and the **covetous man**) have no inheritance in God's kingdom. If God's kingdom is alive in them, a transformation has occurred so that they cannot rest in the habitual practice of these things.

i. Paul's idea in this passage can be applied out of context in a condemning way. One might say, "Well, I've thought about committing fornication, so that means that I have fornicated in my heart and that means that I am as guilty as someone who has actually committed the act of fornication. Since I am as guilty as that one, and they have no inheritance in the kingdom of God, neither do I, because of my thoughts about fornication." But this is against the plain sense of God's word.

b. **Covetous man, who is an idolater:** Significantly, Paul says that the **covetous man** is an **idolater**. Idolatry happens in much more subtle (and powerful) ways than bowing down before a statue.

c. **Let no one deceive you with empty words:** We cannot allow **empty words** to excuse or minimize the judgment due to the practice of these sins. It is certain that **because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.**

d. **Therefore do not be partakers with them:** Paul assumes that Christians will not have their lives *habitually* marked by fornication, uncleanness or covetousness. But we should not even *occasionally* be **partakers with them** who are.

4. (Eph_5:8-12) The passing from darkness to light.

For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

a. **For you were once darkness:** As Paul condemned those who practiced fornication, uncleanness or covetousness as *the sons of disobedience* (Eph_5:6), he also recognized that this was the exact **darkness** Christians emerged from. But now, having been enlightened, we are to **walk as children of the light**.

i. Again, the theme is repeated: you *are* **children of light**, so *live* like **children of light**.

ii. Paul doesn't only say that we were once *in* darkness. He says we **were once darkness** itself. Now, we are not only in the light, we **are light in the Lord**.

b. **For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth:** In contrast to the walk in darkness and wrath is the **fruit of the Spirit**, more fully described in Gal_5:22-23. **Goodness, righteousness, and truth** should mark us, because we have the Holy Spirit in our life.

d. **And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them:** Instead of associating with ungodliness, we expose the **unfruitful works of darkness**. However, we do not do this for the purpose of merely talking about them (which is **shameful**), but for the purpose of educating ourselves enough to avoid them.

i. Christians must guard against a prurient interest in **the works of darkness**, even in times of testimony or research.

ii. Paul is careful to say that we should avoid the **unfruitful works of darkness**, not the people who are in darkness.

B. Walking in the light.

1. (Eph_5:13-14) The fact of the light's presence.

But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

a. **But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light:** Even the things done **in secret** will be exposed. They will be made **manifest** by the light of God's searching judgment.

i. This is a *reason* for avoiding and exposing the unfruitful works of darkness as described in Eph_5:8-12. Since those unfruitful works are destined for exposure and their day will be over, it makes sense for Christians to avoid such unfruitful works.

b. **Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead:** Our participation in the light is shown by our resurrection with Jesus (He *made us alive together with Christ*, Eph_2:5). Paul quoted what was probably a "worship chorus" from the early church to illustrate this truth.

i. Remember that this exhortation to **awake** comes to *Christians*. A Christian may be asleep and not know it. If you are asleep, you probably do not know it. As soon as you become aware of your sleep, it is evidence that you are now awake.

ii. "This sleepiness in the Christian is exceedingly dangerous, too, because he can do a great deal while he is asleep that will make him look as if he were quite awake." (Spurgeon)

- We can speak when we are asleep
- We can hear when we are asleep
- We can walk when we are asleep
- We can sing when we are asleep
- We can think when we are asleep

iii. "The man who is asleep does not care what becomes of his neighbors; how can he while he is asleep? And oh!

some of you Christians do not care whether souls are saved or damned . . . It is enough for them if they are comfortable. If they can attend a respectable place of worship and go with others to heaven, they are indifferent about everything else.” (Spurgeon)

2. (Eph_5:15-17) Walking in the light means walking in wisdom.

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord *is*.

a. **See then that you walk circumspectly:** Because this light was given to us, we should walk **circumspectly** - carefully, wisely, **not as fools**.

i. Adam Clarke thought that the phrase **not as fools** was connected to the practices of devotion to the ancient god Bacchus, worship with drinking and partying. “*Do not become madmen*. Here is a most evident allusion to the *orgies of Bacchus*, in which his votaries acted like madmen; running about, tossing their heads from shoulder to shoulder, appearing to be in every sense completely frantic.”

b. **Redeeming the time:** There are two ancient Greek words used for **time**. One has the idea simply of day upon day and hour upon hour. The other has the idea of a definite portion of time, a time where something should happen. It is the difference between *time* and **the time**. The idea here is of **the time**; it is a definite season of opportunity that Christians must redeem. This same word is translated *opportunity* in Gal_6:10.

i. Paul isn’t telling us to make the most of every moment, even though that is good advice. He tells us to seize opportunity for the glory of Jesus. It isn’t to make the most of time, but to make the most of **the time**.

ii. The idea behind **redeeming the time** is that you buy up opportunities like a shrewd businessman. You make the most

of every opportunity for Jesus Christ.

c. **Because the days are evil:** This is another reason why it is important to walk wisely. Jesus spoke of a time when, *many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.* (Mat_24:11-12) Surely we are in those times, **because the days are evil.**

i. In Massachusetts, a 15-year old was accused of murdering a college student during a mugging, then bragging to his two high school-age accomplices that the knife he used went all the way through the body. After the boy's first appearance before the court, his friends cried - not for the person who had been murdered, but because a high bail had been placed on their friend. Someone asked one of the friends what an appropriate punishment would be for a murderer. "Counseling", he replied. Another friend, a girl, said, "What's the big [bleeping] deal? People die all the time." **The days are evil.**

ii. Actor River Phoenix collapsed and died outside a fashionable L.A. hot spot, but his death hasn't slowed down the club scene at all. Cliff Cantor, a co-owner of the club Dragonfly said, "Nothing's changed. Look around. Nobody's talking about it. The people who go out and do drugs are doing them . . . Business as usual. The week started out on a really glum note. But it's really reassuring to see that people aren't going to wallow in remorse." One 20 year-old named Carol said: "People are pretty jaded about the whole thing. I mean, we're sad, you know? But what are you gonna do?" "Order another drink," quipped her male companion. **The days are evil.**

d. **Understand what the will of the Lord is:** This is what real wisdom is. It is the contrast to being **unwise**. Our main understanding of **the will of the Lord** comes from a good knowledge of His word.

3. (Eph_5:18) Walking in the light means constant filling with the Holy Spirit.

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

a. **And do not be drunk with wine:** In contrast with the conduct of the world (being **drunk with wine**), we are to be **filled with the Spirit**. Paul's grammar clearly says, "be *constantly being filled* with the Holy Spirit."

b. **Be filled with the Spirit:** The filling of the Holy Spirit is not a one-time event that we live off of the rest of our days. It is a constant filling, asking to be filled, and receiving the filling by faith.

i. There is a wonderful and significant *first* experience with the filling of the Holy Spirit, often thought of as the *Baptism of the Holy Spirit* (Mat_3:11, Act_1:5 and Act_11:16). This is an experience valid and important for every believer.

ii. Much of the weakness, defeat and lethargy in our spiritual lives can be attributed to the fact that we are not constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit.

iii. The ancient Greek grammar for **be filled** also indicates two other important things. First, the verb is *passive*, so this is not a manufactured experience. Second, it is *imperative*, so this is not an optional experience.

c. **Do not be drunk with wine:** The carnal contrast to being filled with the Holy Spirit is being **drunk**. The Bible condemns drunkenness without reservation.

i. **In which is dissipation:** Paul says that drunkenness is **dissipation**. This means that drunkenness is a *waste* of resources that should be submitted to Jesus. John Trapp writes of drinking "all the three outs" - "That is, ale out of the pot, money out of the purse, and wit out of the head." (Trapp's commentary on Gal_5:21)

ii. *Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise. (Pro_20:1); Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it*

sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. (Pro_23:29-33) iii. We must not think that *only* the state of “falling down drunk” qualifies as sin. Being impaired in any way by drink is sin, as well as drinking with the *intention* of becoming impaired.

iv. “The danger of drunkenness lies not only in itself but in what it may induce.” (Wood) Yearly, in the United States, alcohol is responsible for almost 100,000 deaths (25,000 by drunk drivers alone), 6 million non-fatal injuries, and more than \$100 billion in economic losses such as unemployment and loss of productivity.

d. **But be filled with the Spirit:** Paul *contrasts* the effect of the Holy Spirit with the state of drunkenness. Alcohol is a depressant; it “loosens” people because it depresses their self-control, their wisdom, their balance and judgment. The Holy Spirit has an exactly opposite effect. He is a stimulant; He moves every aspect of our being to better and more perfect performance.

i. “We find it here imbedded amongst precepts laying down the great laws of self-control, and it comes just before the special directions which the Apostle gives for the quiet sanctities of the Christian home . . . But then, all the while, it is a thing supernatural. It is a state of man wholly unattainable by training, by reasoning, by human wish and will. It is nothing less than - God in command and control of man’s whole life, flowing everywhere into it, that He may flow fully and freely out of it in effects around.” (Moule)

4. (Eph_5:19-20) The Spirit-filled life is marked by worship and gratitude.

Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, a. **Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and**

making melody in your heart to the Lord: When we are *filled with the Spirit*, we will have a desire to worship God, and to encourage others in their worship of God.

i. The connection with being filled with the Spirit and praise is significant. Those who are filled with the Spirit will naturally praise, and praise is a way that we are filled with the Spirit.

b. **Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs:** This variety suggests that God delights in creative, spontaneous worship.

The most important place of us to have a **melody** unto God is in our **heart**. Many who can't sing well have the most beautiful melodies in their heart.

i. The emphasis is more on *variety* than on *strict categories*. "We can scarcely say what is the exact difference between these three expressions." (Clarke) c. **Giving thanks always**

for all things to God: The one who is filled with the Spirit will also be filled with thanksgiving. A complaining heart and the Holy Spirit just don't go together.

i. Paul recommends the same pattern for our thanksgiving as he practiced in prayer in Eph_3:14 - giving thanks *to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

ii. " Every hour, yea, every moment has brought a favor upon its wings. Look downward and give thanks, for you are saved from hell; look on the right hand and give thanks, for you are enriched with gracious gifts; look on the left hand and give thanks, for you are shielded from deadly ills; look above you and give thanks, for heaven awaits you."

(Spurgeon)

5. (Eph_5:21) The Spirit-filled life is marked by mutual submission.

Submitting to one another in the fear of God.

a. **Submitting to one another in the fear of God:** When we are *filled with the Spirit*, it will show by our mutual submission to each other; and the submission will be done **in the fear of God**, not the fear of man.

b. **Submitting:** The word **submitting** here literally means, “to be under in rank.” It is a military word. It speaks of the way that an army is organized among levels of rank. You have Generals and Colonels and Majors and Captains and Sergeants and Privates. There are levels of rank, and you are obligated to respect those in higher rank.

i. We know that as a person, a Private can be smarter, more talented, and a better person than a General. But he is still *under rank* to the General. He isn’t submitted to the General so much as a *person* as he is to the General as a *General*.

ii. The idea of submission doesn’t have anything to do with someone being smarter or better or more talented. It has to do with a God-appointed order. “Anyone who has served in the armed forces knows that ‘rank’ has to do with order and authority, not with value or ability.” (Wiersbe)

iii. We also see from this *how important* it is to be “under rank.” In the military, they have a name for it when you no longer want to be “under rank.” They call it “mutiny.” “Just as an army would be in confusion if there were no levels of authority, so society would be in chaos without submission.” (Wiersbe)

c. **Submitting to one another:** To understand what this means, we can first examine *what it does not mean*. It does not mean that there is no idea of “rank” in the body of Christ. We can see how someone might take that impression. “It says we should be **submitting to one another**. So I should be submitting to you and you should be submitting to me. No one has any more obligation to submit than anyone else.”

i. We know this is what Paul *does not mean* because that would be a clear contradiction of other things that he wrote. For example, in 1Co_5:1-5, Paul clearly tells the Corinthian Christians to submit to his authority and to do something. Can you imagine the Corinthian Christians answering back, “Well Paul, you wrote that we should be **submitting to one another**. So we think you should submit to us here.”

ii. Or, another example is Heb_13:17, which says *Obey those who rule over you and be submissive*. If Paul meant that there was no “rank” or “order of authority” among believers, then this command in Heb_13:17 is meaningless.

iii. The idea of this military word is more easily applied when one rank is above another. But here, Paul isn’t using it in that way. It is easily applied when you tell a bunch of Privates, “Submit to the Generals.” But it is a little more difficult to get a hold of the meaning when you say to a group of Privates “Submit to one another.” Paul isn’t emphasizing the idea of *rank*, because he addresses all Christians. But there is something else important here.

iv. Paul means that we should take this “under rank” attitude of the military and apply it to our everyday dealing with each other. When a man joins the military, the first thing they do is strip away his individuality. He is now the member of a company or a battalion. He is no longer an individual. When you join the army, you essentially sign away your right to decide what you want to do with your life and your time. An army is filled with individuals, but they can never be individualistic. That is the first thing that a man is broken of when he joins the army.

v. “Let no man be so tenacious of his own will or his opinion in matters indifferent, as to disturb the peace of the Church; in all such matters *give way* to each other, and let *love* rule.”

(Clarke) vi. In practical action **submitting to one another** implies the following, all in line with the idea of being a “team player”:

- The Christian must not be thoughtless, but think of others.
- The Christian must not be individualistic, must not be self-assertive. “Self-assertion is the very antithesis of what the Apostle is saying.”
- The Christian must never be self-seeking.
- We must have a “team attitude.”
- We must be happy when someone else succeeds or does well.

• We must bear our own discomforts and trials with courage.
d. **In the fear of God**: This is an important point, because Paul repeats the idea all through the extended section speaking about submission:

- *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*
- *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*
- *Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ.*

i. The words **in the fear of God** describe what should be our *motive* for **submitting to one another**. We should submit to one other - see ourselves no longer in an individualistic way, but as a unit, as a company or a battalion - out of respect for God the Father and out of respect for Jesus Christ.

ii. The motive for submission is *not* social kindness. The motive for submission is *not* the law of God. The motive for submission is *respect for Jesus Christ*. If we respect Jesus, we then should submit to one another because we love Jesus. Paul uses the term **fear** in this passage, but it is a **fear** - a respect - that is *compatible* with love. It is a fear of disappointing Jesus, a fear of grieving Him. That is totally compatible with love. When you really respect someone, you care about pleasing him or her, and you are afraid to disappoint that one.

C. The Spirit-filled life, submission, and responsibility in marriage.

"The danger is that we should think of marriage amongst Christians as essentially the same as it is with everybody else, the only difference being that these two people happen to be Christians whereas the others are not. Now if that is still our conception of marriage then we have considered this great paragraph entirely in vain. Christian marriage, the Christian view of marriage, is something that is essentially different from all views." (D. Martyn Lloyd-

Jones) 1. (Eph_5:22) Walking in the light means wives submit to their husbands.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

a. **Wives:** Paul addressed **wives** and their responsibility in the Christian marriage first. This isn't because they are the bigger problem or because they need special attention. The reason is that the apostle was particularly concerned about this question of submission. That was the principle that he introduced in Eph_5:21. This aspect of submission has a particular application to wives in a Christian marriage.

i. The same logic continues on in the text in Ephesians 6. Children are addressed before parents because Paul was primarily concerned about submission. Slaves are addressed before their masters because the apostle was primarily concerned about submission.

ii. There is no question that the apostle is continuing the thought from Eph_5:21, *submitting to one another in the fear of God*. In many of the best ancient Greek manuscripts, Eph_5:22 doesn't even have the word *submit*. It simply reads *wives, to your own husbands*. The topic is submission and Paul focused on a particularly important realm of submission - the Christian marriage, from the wife unto the husband.

iii. It is as if Paul said this: "I commanded you to submit to one another in a very general way. Now, if you do it in a general way, how much more so should **wives** do it to their own husbands in this special relationship of marriage."

b. **Wives, submit:** To **submit** means that you recognize someone has legitimate authority over you. It means you recognize that there is an order of authority, and that you are part of a unit, a team. You as an individual are not more important than the working of the unit or the team.

i. When we **submit** to God, we recognize God's authority and act accordingly. When we **submit** to the police, we recognize the authority of the police and act accordingly.

When we **submit** to our employer, we recognize the authority of our employer and act accordingly.

ii. *Submission does not mean inferiority.* As well, *submission does not mean silence.* Submission means “sub-mission.” There is a mission for the Christian marriage, and that mission is obeying and glorifying God. The wife says, “I’m going to put myself under that *mission*. That *mission* is more important than my individual desires.

I’m not putting myself below my husband, I’m putting myself below the *mission* God has for our marriage, for my life.”

c. **To your own husbands:** This defines the *sphere* of a wife’s submission. The Bible never commands a *general* submission of women unto men in society. This order is commanded only in the spheres of the home and in the church.

God has not commanded in His word that men have exclusive authority in the areas of politics, business, education, and so on.

d. **As to the Lord:** This is a crucial phrase. It colors everything else we understand about this passage. There have been two main “wrong” interpretations of this phrase, each favoring a certain “position.”

i. The wrong interpretation that the interpretation that “favors” the husband says that **as to the Lord** means that a wife should submit to her husband as if he were God himself. The idea is “you submit to God in absolutely everything with question, so you must submit to your husband in the same absolute way.” This thinks that **as to the Lord** defines the *extent* of submission.

ii. This is wrong. It is true that the wife owes the husband a great deal of respect. Peter sets this across when he praises Sarah, the wife of Abraham, as an example of a godly wife, when she called Abraham “Lord.” That doesn’t mean “Lord” in the sense of God, but “Lord” in the sense of “master.” That is a lot of respect. But still, it doesn’t go as far as to say “You

submit completely to God, so you must submit to your husband the same way.” Simply put, *in no place* does the Scripture say that a person should submit to another in that way. There are limits to the submission your employer can expect of you. There are limits to the submission the government can expect of you.

There are limits to the submission parents can expect of children. In no place does the Scripture teach an unqualified, without exception, submission - except to God and God alone. To violate this is to commit the sin of idolatry.

iii. The wrong interpretation that “favors” the wife says that **as to the Lord** means “I’ll submit to him as long as he does what the Lord wants.” Then the wife often thinks it is her job to decide what the Lord wants. This interpretation thinks that **as to the Lord** defines the *limit* of submission.

iv. This is wrong. It is true that there are limits to a wife’s submission, which we will specifically discuss in a few moments. But when the wife approaches **as to the Lord** in this way, then it degenerates into a case of “I’ll submit to my husband when I agree with him. I’ll submit to him when he makes the right decisions and carries them out the right way. When he makes a wrong decision, he isn’t in **the Lord**, so I shouldn’t submit to him then.” *That is not submission at all.* Except for those who are just plain cantankerous and argumentative, *everyone* submits to others when they are in agreement. It is only when there is a *disagreement* that submission is tested.

e. **As to the Lord** does not define the *extent* of a wife’s submission. It does not define the *limit* of a wife’s submission. It defines the *motive* of a wife’s submission.

i. “It means: ‘Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands because it is a part of your duty to the Lord, because it is an expression of your submission to the Lord.’ Or, ‘Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands; do it in this way, do it as a part of your submission to the Lord.’ In other words, you are not doing it only for the husband, you

are doing it primarily for the Lord Himself . . . You are doing it for Christ's sake, you are doing it because you know that He exhorts you to do it, because it is well-pleasing in His sight that you should be doing it. It is part of your Christian behaviour, it is a part of your discipleship." (Lloyd-Jones)

ii. "For the Lord's sake who commanded it, so that ye cannot be subject to him without being subject to them."

(Clarke)

iii. **As to the Lord** means . . .

- A wife's submission to her husband is part of her Christian life.

- When a wife doesn't obey this word to **submit to your own husband as to the Lord**, she isn't only falling short as a wife. She is falling short as a follower of Jesus Christ.

- This is completely out of the realm of "my nature" or "my personality."

- This is a different way to live, setting us apart from our culture.

- This has nothing to do with a husband's intelligence, giftedness, or capability. It has to do with honoring the Lord Jesus Christ.

- This has nothing to do with whether or not the husband is "right" on a particular issue. It has to do with Jesus being right.

- This means that a woman should take great care in how she *chooses* her husband. Remember, ladies: this is what God requires of you in marriage. This is *His* expectation of you. Instead of looking for an attractive man, instead of looking for a wealthy man, instead of looking for a romantic man, you better first look for a man you can *respect*. G. Campbell Morgan recalls the story of the older Christian woman who had never married, and she explained "I never met a man who could master me." She had the right idea.

- If you want to please Jesus, if you want to honor Him, then **submit to your own husband as to the Lord**.

iv. “There can be no more compelling motive for any action than this; and every Christian wife who is concerned above everything else to please the Lord Jesus Christ, will find no difficulty in this paragraph; indeed it will be her greatest delight to do what the Apostle tells us here.” (Lloyd-Jones)

2. (Eph_5:23-24) Reasons for a Christian wife’s submission.

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let the wives be* to their own husbands in everything.

a. **For:** The command given in Eph_5:22 is difficult. God knows this, so He also includes *reasons* for His command. He wants us to understand the principle behind the command, and to understand that God isn’t simply making up rules.

i. The first reason for a Christian wife’s submission to her husband is found in Eph_5:22, in the words *as to the Lord*. This means that the motive of her submission must be obedience and respect to Jesus, instead of obedience and respect to her husband.

b. **For the husband is the head of the wife:** Paul states here the second reason for a wife’s submission. It is because the husband is **the head of the wife**. In its full sense **head** has the idea of *headship* and *authority*. It means to have the appropriate responsibility to lead, and the matching accountability. It is right and appropriate to submit to someone who is our **head**.

i. When you look at the Biblical idea of headship in other passages such as 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 3, the emphasis is put constantly upon the fact that the man was created first and not the woman. So there is a natural priority for man. The Scriptures also emphasize the fact that that woman was made out of the man, taken out of the man to show a connection to him, and that she was meant to be a ‘help’ for man, a help for man that was ‘meet’ for him.

ii. “Notice that the Apostles lay great stress upon it. Man was created first. But not only that; man was also made the lord

of creation. It was to man that this authority was given over the brute animal creation; it was man who was called upon to give them names. Here are indications that man was put into a position of leadership, lordship, and authority and power. He takes the decisions, he gives the rulings. That is the fundamental teaching with regard to this whole matter.” (Lloyd-Jones)

iii. 1Co_11:7-10 applies the same principle to the issue of leadership in the church: *For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.* (1Co_11:7-10)

iv. This passage makes the point clearly and strongly. God created Adam first, and gave Him responsibility over Eve. This happened *before* the fall. Therefore, this passage makes it clear that before and after the fall, God ordained there be different roles between husband and wife. The difference in roles between husband and wife are not the result of the fall, and are not erased by our new life in Jesus.

v. “What he is saying is that the woman is different, that she is the complement of the man. What he does prohibit is that woman should seek to be manly, that is, that a woman should seek to behave as a man, or that a woman should seek to usurp the place, the position, and the power which have been given to man by God Himself. That is all he is saying. It is not slavery; he is exhorting his readers to realize what God has ordained.” (Lloyd-Jones)

vi. “When a woman gets married she gives up her name, she takes the name of her husband. That is biblical, and also the custom of the whole world. That teaches us the relationship between the husband and the wife. It is not the husband who changes his name, but the wife.” (Lloyd-Jones)

c. **As also Christ is head of the church . . . Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands:** Paul presents here a third reason for a Christian wife's submission to her husband. She should submit because the relationship of the husband and wife is a model of the union between Jesus and the Church.

i. This point is simple and clear. We have a model for the marriage relationship: the relationship between Jesus and the church. In that relationship, the headship of Jesus Christ is unquestioned. So also is the husband the head of the "team" that is the one-flesh relationship of husband and wife.

ii. Perhaps the Christian wife doesn't want a "head." Perhaps she doesn't want a "leader" of the team between husband and wife. If that is the case, the wife does not understand a Biblical marriage, and will always be working against it in one way or another. It is the same dynamic as a Christian saying he doesn't want Jesus to be his "head."

d. **And He is the Savior of the body:** We can understand how the **husband is head of the wife** in the same way that **Christ is head of the church**. Sometimes it is difficult to see how the husband is the *Savior of the body* in the way that Jesus is the **Savior of the body**, that is, of the Church.

i. Lloyd-Jones exposes the problem: "They ask, Can you say that the husband is the saviour of his wife as Christ is the Saviour of the church? That, they say, is nonsense. Christ, we know, died for the church. He saves us by His atoning death and by His resurrection; but you cannot say that about any other relationship. It is quite unique."

ii. Lloyd-Jones thinks Paul used the wider understanding of the word **Savior**, which can simply mean *preserver*.

1Ti_4:10 speaks of Jesus being *the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe*. How can Jesus be the *Savior of all men*? In the sense that He *preserves* all men and *blesses* all men with good things from heaven above. It is in

this way that husbands are to be their wife's *savior*. Paul essentially repeats the same idea in Eph_5:28-29 : *So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.*

iii. "What, then, is the doctrine? It is clearly this. The wife is the one who is kept, preserved, guarded, shielded, provided for by the husband. That is the relationship - as Christ nourishes and cherishes the church, so the husband nourishes and cherishes the wife - and the wife should realize that that is her position in this relationship." (Lloyd-Jones)

e. **Of the body:** The picture of the **body** shows how essential a Christian wife's submission is. "The wife must not act before the husband. All the teaching indicates that he is the head, that he ultimately controls. So she not only does not act independently of him, she does not act before him . . . it is equally true to say that she must not delay action, she must not stall action, she must not refuse to act. Go back to the analogy of the body. Think of somebody who has had a 'stroke' . . .

the arm is not healthy, it resists movement." (Lloyd-Jones)

i. "We can sum it up thus: The teaching is that the initiative and the leadership are ultimately the husband's, but the action must always be co-ordinated. That is the meaning of this picture - co-ordinated action but leadership in the head. There is no sense of inferiority suggested by this. The wife is not inferior to her husband; she is different."

(Lloyd-Jones)

f. **Therefore:** We see in this passage three reasons for a wife's submission to her husband: · It is part of her obedience to Jesus (*as to the Lord*).

· It is appropriate to the order of creation (**the husband is the head of the wife**).

· It is appropriate because of the model of the relationship between Jesus and the Church (**as also Christ is head of the church . . . as the church is subject to Christ**).

i. The first reason is compelling enough, but in itself it doesn't close the issue. If all we had was *as to the Lord*, it might be fair enough to ask, "Aren't men to live *as to the Lord* also? Shouldn't men submit to their wives in obedience to Jesus in the same way?" Then you wouldn't have a real "head" of the home. You would not have one of the two really in charge, really in ultimate responsibility. And this is the goal some marriages shoot for. "No one is really in charge. We're equal partners. I'll submit to you sometimes and you submit to me other times. We'll just let Jesus be our head, and work out each situation as it comes along, and see who will submit to whom."

ii. To say it simply, that isn't a Biblical marriage relationship. It ignores the essential order of creation, and it ignores the model of the relationship between Jesus and the Church. This leads us to carefully notice something in general about submission. The principle of submission is presented in many different ways in the New Testament.

- Jesus submitted to His parents (Luk_2:51).
- Demons submitted to the disciples (Luk_10:17).
- Citizens should submit to government authority (Rom_13:1 and Rom_13:5, Tit_3:1, 1Pe_2:13).
- The universe will submit to Jesus (1Co_15:27 and Eph_1:22).
- Unseen spiritual beings submit to Jesus (1Pe_3:22).
- Christians should submit to church leaders (1Co_16:15-16 and Heb_13:17).
- Wives should submit to husbands (Col_3:18, Tit_2:5, 1Pe_3:5, Eph_5:22-24).
- The church should submit to Jesus (Eph_5:24).
- Servants should submit to masters (Tit_2:9 and 1Pe_2:18).
- Christians should submit to God (Heb_12:9 and Jam_4:7).

iii. None of these relations are reversed. For example, masters are never told to submit to servants, Jesus is never told to submit to the church, and so forth. The consistent use of the idea of submission in the Scriptures illustrates basically a “one-way” submission to one who is in a position of authority.

iv. If Paul stopped at Eph_5:24, it would be easy for a Christian wife to feel that all the obligations were on her.

Thankfully, he continues, and shows what obligations the Christian husband has in marriage. But the Christian wife still has her obligations.

- Both husband and wife are called to die to self - submission is the way the wife does it.

- Both husband and wife are called to sacrifice - submission is the way the wife does it.

- Both husband and wife are called to see their marriage as a model of Jesus’ relationship with the church - submission is the way the wife honors that model.

- Both husband and wife are called to honor the order of creation - submission is the way the wife fulfills her place in that order.

- Both husband and wife are called to be motivated by the love and the command of Jesus - submission is the way the wife does that.

g. **To their own husbands in everything:** Paul says that the wife should be subject to the husbands **in everything**.

Does he really mean **everything**? This needs to be understood in same way we understand submission in other spheres.

For example, when Paul says in Romans 13 that the Christian must submit to the state, we understand there are exceptions. So, what are the exceptions to **everything**?

i. When the husband asks the wife to sin, she is free from her obligation to submit. This applies in a place of clearly Biblical sin - such as signing a fraudulent tax return. It also applies in matters of true Christian conscience. But we must

be very careful to distinguish between true Christian conscience and mere opinion. But the wife does not have to submit to a request to commit sin.

ii. When the husband is medically incapacitated, or insane, she is free from her obligation to submit. A wife does not have to submit to the requests a husband makes when he is insane or medically incapacitated.

iii. When the husband is physically abusive, and endangers the safety of the wife or children, the wife is free from her obligation to submit. She does not have to submit to his violence.

iv. When the husband breaks the marriage bond by adultery. Obviously, a wife does not have to submit to her husband's adultery, and just accept it. The Bible says she has the right to "come out from under his rank" in such cases. "If the husband has been guilty of adultery the wife is no longer bound to give him obedience in everything.

She can divorce him, she is allowed to do so by the Scripture. She is entitled to do so because adultery breaks the unity, breaks the relationship. They are now separate and no longer one. He has broken the unity, he has gone out of it. So we must not interpret this Scripture as teaching that the wife is this irrevocably, inevitably bound to an adulterous husband for the rest of her life. She may choose to be - that is for her to decide. All I am saying is, that this Scripture does not command it." (Lloyd-Jones)

3. (Eph_5:25 a) The simple command to Christian husbands: love your wife.

Husbands, love your wives,

a. **Husbands, love your wives:** Paul's words to Christian husbands safeguards his previous words to wives. Though wives are to submit to their husbands, it never excuses husbands acting as tyrants over their wives.

i. According to 2Ti_1:7, God has given us the spirit of power - but also of love. Power, in their Christian life, is always to be exercised in love. "It is not naked power, it is not the power

of a dictator or a little tyrant, it is not the idea of a man who arrogates to himself certain rights, and tramples upon his wife's feelings and so on, and sits in the home as a dictator . . . No husband is entitled to say that he is the head of the wife unless he loves his wife . . . So the reign of the husband is to be a reign and a rule of love; it is a leadership of love." (Lloyd-Jones) b. **Love your wives:** Paul used the ancient Greek word *agape*. The ancient Greeks had four different words we translate **love**. It is important to understand the difference between the words, and why the apostle Paul chose the Greek word *agape* here.

i. *Eros* was one word for love. It described, as we might guess from the word itself, *erotic* love. It refers to love driven by *desire*.

ii. *Storge* was the second word for love. It refers to family love, the kind of love there is between a parent and child, or between family members in general. It is love driven by *blood*.

iii. *Philia* is the third word for love. It speaks of a brotherly friendship and affection. It is the love of deep friendship and partnership. It might be described as the highest love of which man, without God's help, is capable of. It is *fondness*, or love driven by *common interests and affection*.

iv. *Agape* is the fourth word for love. *Eros*, *storge*, and *philia* each speak about love that is *felt*. These describe "instinctive" love, love that comes spontaneously from the heart. Paul *assumes* that *eros* (desire) and *phileo* (fondness) are present. Christians should not act as if these things do not matter in the marriage relationship. They do matter. But Paul's real point is to address a higher kind of love, *agape* love. *Agape* describes a different kind of love. It is a love more of *decision* than of the *spontaneous heart*. It is as much a matter of the *mind* than the *heart*, because it chooses to love the undeserving.

v. "*Agape* has to do with the *mind*: it is not simply an emotion which rises unbidden in our hearts; it is a principle

by which we deliberately live.” (Barclay) *Agape* really doesn’t have much to do with *feelings* - it has to do with *decisions*.

vi. Strictly speaking, *agape* can’t be defined as “God’s love,” because men are said to *agape* sin and the world (Joh_3:19, 1Jn_2:15). But it can be defined as a sacrificial, giving, absorbing, love. The word has little to do with emotion; it has much to do with self-denial for the sake of another.

- It is a love that loves without changing.
- It is a self-giving love that gives without demanding or expecting re-payment.
- It is love so great that it can be given to the unlovable or unappealing.
- It is love that loves even when it is rejected.

Agape love gives and loves because it wants to; it does not demand or expect repayment from the love given.

It gives because it loves, it does not love in order to receive.

vii. We can read this passage and think that Paul is saying “husbands, be kind to your wives.” Or “husbands, be nice to your wives.” There is no doubt that for many marriages, this would be a huge improvement. But that isn’t what Paul writes about. What he really means is, “husbands, continually practice self-denial for the sake of your wives.”

4. (Eph_5:25-27) The standard and example of a Christian husband’s love.

Just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

a. **Just as Christ also loved the church:** Jesus’ *attitude* towards the church is a pattern for the Christian husband’s love to his wife. This shows that the loveless marriage

doesn't please God. It doesn't fulfill His purpose. This is love given to the undeserving. This is love given *first*. This is love that may be *rejected*, but still loves.

i. "It is possible that some husbands might say, 'How can I love such a wife as I have?' It might be a supposable case that some Christian was unequally yoked together with an unbeliever, and found himself for ever bound with a fetter to one possessed of a morose disposition, of a froward temper, of a bitter spirit. He might therefore say, 'Surely I am excused from loving in such a case as this. It cannot be expected that I should love that which is in itself so unlovely.' But mark, beloved, the wisdom of the apostle. He silences that excuse, which may possibly have occurred to his mind while writing the passage, by taking the example of the Savior, who loved, not because there was loveliness in his Church, but in order to make her lovely." (Spurgeon)

b. **Just as Christ also loved the church:** We might say that Paul is teaching two things at once here. He teaches about the nature of the relationship between husband and wife, and he teaches about the relationship between Christ and His Church. Each illustrates important principles about the other.

i. It demonstrates the Jesus loves his church with a *special* love. Jesus loves the world, and died for the world; but just as a husband can have a general love for everyone, he must also have a *special* love for his bride.

ii. "I ask you to notice what is not always the case with regard to the husband and the wife, that *the Lord Jesus loves his church unselfishly*; that is to say, he never loved her for what she has, but what she is; nay, I must go further than that, and say that he loved her, not so much for what she is, but what he makes her as the object of his love. He loves her not for what comes to him from her, or with her, but for what he is able to bestow upon her. His is the strongest love that ever was." (Spurgeon)

iii. Using the love of an ideal husband as a pattern, we could say that Jesus has a constant love for His people, an enduring love for His people, and a hearty love for His people.

c. **And gave Himself for her:** Jesus' *action* towards the church is a pattern. This helps us define what *agape* love is all about: it is self-sacrificing love. How should a husband love his wife? **As Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.** What did that involve? Perhaps the best statement concerning that matter is in Php_2:5-8, where it shows that the focus of Jesus was on the church. It was for the church that He did what He did, not for Himself.

i. *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

ii. Husbands may say, "I thought God said I was the head of the home." You are the head. "I thought my wife was supposed to submit to me." She is supposed to submit to you. "Then why do I have to lay down my life and sacrifice? Why do I have to humble myself, and give away my high-minded reputation, and be servant? I thought I was in charge!" There is only one answer to this husband: You understand "headship" and "submission" in a very *worldly* way. You don't understand it in a *godly* way.

- Worldly headship: "I am your head, so you take your orders from me and must do whatever I want."

- Godly headship: "I am your head, so I must care for you and serve you."

- Worldly submission: "You must submit to me, so here are the things I want you to do for me."

- Godly submission: "You must submit to me, so I am accountable before God for you. I must care for you and

serve you.”

iii. This is not the height of romantic love as the world knows it. This isn't love based on looks, image, the ability to be suave and cutting-edge cool. This is love expressed through *sacrifice*.

d. **That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word:** When Jesus **gave Himself** for the church on the cross, it also provided cleansing from every stain sin makes. Since the work of Jesus on the cross comes to us through the Word of God and the preached word, it can be said that we are washed **of water by the word**.

i. When Paul says **the washing of water by the word**, he uses the ancient Greek word *rhema*. “It is true that *rhema* is not quite the same as *logos*, but carries with it the definite sense of the *spoken* word . . . it may have the sense of that truth as *proclaimed*, the *preached* Word or Gospel.” (Salmond) There is something cleansing about being under the teaching of the Word.

ii. “I do not believe that baptism is intended here, nor even referred to. I know that the most of commentators say it is. I do not think it. It strikes me that one word explains the whole. Christ sanctifies and cleanses us by the washing of water, but what sort of water? By the Word. The water which washes away sin, which cleanses and purifies the soul, is the Word.” (Charles Spurgeon, a confirmed Baptist)

iii. This speaks of Jesus' work for the church. Obviously, a husband cannot spiritual cleanse his wife the same way Jesus cleanses the church. But a husband can take an active, caring interest in his wife's spiritual health. As the priest of the home, he helps her keep “clean” before the Lord.

e. **That He might present her to Himself a glorious church:** This means that Jesus shares His prospects, His future with His bride. A Christian husband should share his prospects and future with his wife. And as a wife will share in

the husband's future, so we will share in the glorious future of our Lord.

i. "Since the Church is not fit for Christ by nature, he resolved to make her so by grace. He could not be in communion with sin. Therefore it must be purged away. Perfect holiness was absolutely necessary in one who was to be the bride of Christ. He purposes to work that in her, and to make her meet to be his spouse eternally. The great means by which he attempts to do this, is, 'he gave himself for her.'" (Spurgeon)

ii. "The Lord will not have a sluttish Church, and therefore he came not by blood only, but by water also, that clean water of his Spirit, whereby he washeth away the swinish nature of his saints, so that they desire no more to wallow in the mire." (Trapp)

f. **Not having spot or wrinkle:** The idea isn't that the bride is in this state *before* the "wedding day," but *on* the wedding day. "That is what is meant by the phrase 'glorious church'. She will be in a state of glory."

i. "The Holy Ghost seems to exhaust language to describe this purity. He says, 'Without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!' She shall have nothing like a spot, nothing that can be construed into a wrinkle; she shall be fair, and the world shall be compelled to acknowledge that she is." (Spurgeon)

ii. "When He presents her to Himself, with all the principalities and powers and the serried ranks for all the potentates of heaven looking on at this marvelous thing, and scrutinizing and examining her, there will not be a single blemish, there will not be a spot upon her. The most careful examination will not be able to detect the slightest speck of unworthiness or of sin." (Lloyd-Jones)

iii. "How should we be feeling? We should feel exactly as any woman who becomes engaged to be married feels. We should be looking forward to the great day, and longing for it, and living for it." (Lloyd-Jones)

5. (Eph_5:28-29) The application of the principles to the duty of a Christian husband.

So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church.

a. **So husbands:** In Eph_5:22-24, Paul gave three reasons for a Christian wife's submission to her husband. In addressing the Christian husbands, Paul also gave three reasons to love their wife:

i. First, they should love their wife this way because this is what love is. Paul indicates this in Eph_5:25 : *Husbands, love your wives.*

ii. Second, they should love their wife this way because the relationship between husband and wife has a pattern: the relationship of Jesus and His church. Paul indicates this in Eph_5:25-29 : *Just as Christ also loved the church .*

. . So husbands ought to love their own wives . . . just as the Lord does the church.

iii. The third reason is found in Eph_5:28-32. The Christian husband must love his wife this way *because you are one with her*, just as Jesus is one with the church.

b. **So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies:** The single word **as** is very important. Paul does not say, "So ought men to love their wives in the same way as they love their bodies." That would be an improvement in many cases, but that is not the meaning. The meaning is, "So ought men to love their wives because they are their own bodies."

i. A man loves his wife as his body - that is what he is saying. A man must love his wife as his body, as a part of himself. As Eve was a part of Adam, taken out of his side, so the wife is to the man, because she is a part of him.

ii. "The Apostle puts it in this form in order that a husband may see that he cannot detach himself from his wife.

You cannot detach yourself from your body, so you cannot detach yourself from your wife. She is a part of you, says the Apostle, so remember that always. (Lloyd-Jones)

iii. "The husband must realize that his wife is a part of himself. He will not feel this instinctively; he has to be taught it; and the Bible in all its parts teaches it. In other words, the husband must understand that he and his wife are not two: they are one." (Lloyd-Jones)

iv. This means for that success in the marriage relationship, we must *think* and *understand*. The world relies upon "love" and feelings to make marriage work, and never really makes a person *think* and *understand* about marriage.

c. **He who loves his wife loves himself:** Simply said, when you love your wife, *you benefit yourself*. Perhaps it is better to put it in the negative: *when you neglect your wife, you neglect yourself, and it will come back to hurt you*.

i. We all know what it is like to neglect something - like a noise or a maintenance issue on an automobile - and it comes back to hurt you. Husbands, it is *even more true* regarding your wife, because *she is part of you*.

ii. "On the practical level, therefore, the whole of the husband's thinking must include his wife also. He must never think of himself in isolation or detachment. The moment he does so he has broken the most fundamental principle of marriage. In a sense, the moment a man thinks of himself in isolation he has broken the marriage. And he has no right to do that! There is a sense in which he cannot do it, because the wife is a part of himself. But if it happens he is certain to inflict grievous damage on his wife; and it is damage in which he himself will be involved because she is a part of him." (Lloyd-Jones)

d. **For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it:** Any man in his right mind is going to take care of **his own flesh**, even if it is just in the sense of feeding and clothing and caring for his own body. He knows that if he doesn't, *he* is going to suffer for it. In the same

way, once we know the Biblical fact of this unity, if we are in our right minds we will *nourish and cherish* our wives, because she is part of us.

e. **Just as the Lord does the church:** The principle of *oneness* also is dominant in the relationship between Jesus and His people.

- There is oneness of life: We share the same vital resurrection life that resides in Jesus Himself.
- There is oneness of service: We are privileged to be co-workers with our Lord.
- There is oneness of feeling: Jesus feels a unique sympathy with us, and we feel a unique sympathy with Him.
- There is oneness of mutual necessity: We cannot exist without Him and He cannot exist without us, in the sense that a redeemer is not a redeemer without any redeemed; a savior is not a savior without any saved
- There is oneness of nature: The same genetic code links us with our Savior, and we are partakers of the divine nature
- There is oneness of possession: We share in the riches of His glory both now and in the age to come
- There is oneness of present condition: When our Savior is lifted high, so are His people with Him.
- There is oneness of future destiny: We will be glorified with Him.

6. (Eph_5:30-32) The mystical union between Jesus and the church, and its relation to marriage.

For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

a. **For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones:** Paul here brings the analogy back in a circle. First, the relationship between Jesus and the church spoke to us about the husband-wife relationship. Now the marriage

relationship speaks to us about the relationship between Jesus and His people.

i. With the same intimacy, love, and sharing that an ideal husband and wife share, Jesus wants to live with His people.

b. **For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh:** Paul quoted this essential passage from Gen_2:24. Relevant to marriage, it shows that just as the first man and the first woman were one - she was taken from him, and then brought back to him - so it could be said of every married man today that he is **joined to his wife**. God did the joining. Husbands can resent it, they can resist it, they can ignore it, but it doesn't change the fact.

i. It shows a fundamental principle for promoting oneness in marriage: there must be a *leaving* (former associations) and a *cleaving* (joining together as one).

c. **This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the ch**

(Eph 6:1) Children,¹ obey your parents in the Lord² for this is right.

(Guzik)

Eph 6:1-24

Ephesians 6 - WALKING IN THE LIGHT AND FIGHTING THE DARKNESS

A. The Spirit-filled life and two other special areas of submission.

1. (Eph_6:1-3) The Spirit-filled life and the parent-child relationship.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

a. **Children, obey your parents:** The command is simple. Children are to **obey** their **parents**. This not only means that children have the responsibility to obey, but parents

have the responsibility to *teach* their children obedience - one of the most important jobs for a parent.

i. We don't need to teach our children how to disobey, because they have each inherited an inclination to sin from Adam - but obedience must be taught.

ii. It is essential that a parent teach the child obedience, so that the child will grow up knowing how to obey God even when he doesn't understand everything or doesn't want to.

iii. This is what all a parent's discipline for a child must come to. Disobedience must be punished, so that obedience can be learned.

b. **In the Lord, for this is right:** The apostle gives us two reasons for the child to obey the parent. First, they are to obey **in the Lord**. This means that their obedience is part of their Christian obedience, in a similar way to the wife's command to submit to her husband *as to the Lord* (Eph_5:22). The second reason is because it is simply **right** for a child to obey their parent.

i. What it *means* to **honor our father and mother** may change as we grow into adulthood, but the principle always endures. The adult child does not owe the parent obedience, but they do owe the parent *honor*.

ii. "When the bonds of family life break up, when respect for parents fails, the community becomes decadent and will not *live long*." (Foulkes)

c. **The first commandment with a promise:** Paul reinforced this idea with a reference to Deu_5:16, where God promised to bless the obedient child.

i. Christians have normally divided the Ten Commandments into the first four (directed towards God) and the last six (directed towards their fellow man). But the Jews divided the commandments in two sets of five, seeing the law to **honor your father and mother** more as a duty towards God than a duty towards man.

2. (Eph_6:4) How parents walk in the light: not provoking their children to wrath.

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

a. **Do not provoke your children to wrath:** Parents certainly have the opportunity to **provoke** their **children to wrath**, through an unkind, over-critical attitude that torments the child instead of training them. But Christian parents should never be like that.

i. “The gospel introduced a fresh element into parental responsibility by insisting that the feelings of the child must be taken into consideration. In a society where the father’s authority (*patria potestas*) was absolute, this represented a revolutionary concept.” (Wood)

b. **Provoke your children to wrath:** This harsh kind of parenting Paul speaks against gives an unnecessary justification to a child’s natural rebellion.

i. “When you are disciplining a child, you should have first controlled yourself . . . What right have you to say to your child that he needs discipline when you obviously need it yourself?” (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones)

c. **Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord:** This does not mean merely scolding your children in the sense of **admonition**. It means to *train* and *admonish*. Encouragement and rebuke must be combined with training and teaching.

i. This is a responsibility for **fathers**. They must not neglect their responsibility to teach and be a spiritual example for their children. It is not a responsibility that should be left to the mother or the Sunday School.

ii. **Training** is the same word translated *chastening* in Heb_12:5-11. It has the idea of training through corrective discipline. **Admonition** has more of the idea of “teaching” - both are necessary, though it may be significant that **training** comes first.

iii. Significantly, both **training and admonition** are used to describe the purpose of the Scriptures (1Ti_3:16 and

1Co_10:11). Parents are to raise their children on the word of God.

d. **Bring them up:** This ancient Greek word was originally used of bodily nourishment as in Eph_5:29. But the word came to be used for the nurture of body, mind and soul. The form here suggests “development by care and pains” or as Calvin translated, “Let them be fondly cherished.”

3. (Eph_6:5-8) How employees walk in the light: working as servants of Jesus.

Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether *he is* a slave or free.

a. **Bondservants, be obedient . . . as to Christ: As to Christ** changes our whole perspective as workers. It reminds us that our work can and should be done as if we were working for Jesus - *because we are!*

i. “The Gospel found slavery in the world; and in many regions, particularly the Roman and the Greek, it was a very bad form of slavery. The Gospel began at once to undermine it, with its mighty principles of the equality of all souls in the mystery and dignity of manhood, and of the equal work of redeeming love wrought for all souls by the supreme Master. But its plan was - not to batter, but to undermine. . . . So while the Gospel in one respect left slavery alone, it doomed it in another.” (Moule)

b. **Not with eyeservice:** We are not to work with **eyeservice** (working only when the boss is looking) or as **men-pleasers** (those who only care about pleasing man), but with **good will** (a good attitude, not complaining) **doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.**

i. **As to the Lord** means that all our work is really done unto the Lord, not unto man. “Grace makes us the servants

of God while still we are the servants of men: it enables us to do the business of heaven while we are attending to the business of earth: it sanctifies the common duties of life by showing us how to perform them in the light of heaven.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Doing the will of God:** In Greek culture, manual work was despised and the goal of being successful was getting to the point where you never had to do any work. This isn’t how it is in God’s kingdom, where hard work and manual labor are honorable.

i. It should be said of every Christian that they are a hard worker and give their boss a full day’s work for their pay; to do anything less is to steal from your boss.

e. **He will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free:** Paul relates a final reason for working hard for the Lord. God will return to us in the measure that we have worked hard for others; God will not allow our hard work to go without reward.

i. This connects to an interesting principle. When people are born again, their life changes and they become harder workers and less wasteful, and they are blessed thereby and become prosperous. But after becoming prosperous, we often allow our hearts to grow far from God, then God disciplines us with hard times, and then we repent - and then the cycle starts again. This is not a *necessary* cycle, but it is a common one.

4. (Eph_6:9) How employers walk in the light: treating their workers well.

And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

a. **You, masters, do the same things to them:** Masters are told to **do the same things to them** (their employees).

The **same things** are hard and honest work that employers are to do on behalf of their employees.

i. “So the Gospel leaves its message of absolutely *equal obligation*, in Jesus Christ, upon the slave and upon the slave owner. The principle will do its work. There is no word of Revolution.” (Moule)

b. **Giving up threatening:** Employers are also to give up **threatening** and other forms of harsh treatment. They do this knowing that they are employees of their Master in heaven - and He judges without regard to wealth or position.

B. Fighting against the darkness.

William Gurnall, a pastor, published his book *The Christian in Complete Armour*, an exposition of Eph_6:10-20. He subtitled the work *The saint's war against the Devil, wherein a discovery is made of that grand enemy of God and his people, in his policies, power, seat of his empire, wickedness, and chief design he hath against the saints; a magazine opened, from whence the Christian is furnished with spiritual arms for the battle, helped on with his armour, and taught the use of his weapon; together with the happy issue of the whole war*. In his dedication, he describes his book as a “mite” and a “little present” but it comprises three volumes, 261 chapters, and 1,472 pages - all on these eleven verses.

1. (Eph_6:10) The call to stand against the devil.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

a. **Finally:** This comes at the end of the letter - a letter that Paul has carefully established our place in Jesus, and then the basics of the Christian walk. This is his last section dealing with that walk.

- In light of all that God has done for you.
- In light of the glorious standing you have as a child of God.
- In light of His great plan of the ages that God has made you part of.
- In light of the plan for Christian maturity and growth He gives to you.
- In light of the conduct God calls every believer to live.

- In light of the filling of the Spirit and our walk in the Spirit.
- In light of all this, *there is a battle to fight in the Christian life.*

b. **Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might:** Literally, Paul wrote *strengthen yourselves in the Lord*. He probably took the idea from 1Sa_30:6, where it is said that David *strengthened himself in the LORD his God*.

i. The detailed teaching of spiritual warfare in this passage presents two essential components. First, you must **be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might**. Then, you must **put on the whole armor of God**. The two are essential, and much teaching on Christian combat neglects the first. If you take a weak man who can barely stand, and put the best armor on him he will still be an ineffective soldier. He will be easily beaten. So equipping for Christian combat must *begin* with **be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might**.

ii. Before a soldier is given a gun or shown how to fire a missile, he goes through *basic training*. One great purpose for basic training is the build up the recruit's physical strength. It is as if the army says, "Soldier, we are going to give you the best weapons and armor possible. But first we have to make sure that you are strong, and that you can use what we give you."

c. **And in the power of His might:** This shows how to get this strength. This does not happen just by saying the words. It is not an incantation or a spell. You can't just walk around saying, "**be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might**" over and over and it will happen. Christianity isn't one of those self-help formulas where you go around saying, "Every day, and in every way, I am getting better and better." Those kind of mental games can accomplish something, but it certainly wasn't what Paul meant here.

i. **Might** is inherent power or force. A muscular man's big muscles display his might, even if he doesn't use them. It is the *reserve* of strength.

ii. **Power** is the exercise of might. When the muscular man uses his might to bend an iron bar, he uses his power.

It means that the reserve of strength is actually in operation.

iii. God has vast reservoirs of **might** that can be realized as **power** in our Christian life. But His **might** does not work in me as I sit passively. His might works in me as I rely on it, and step out to do the work. I can rely on it and do no work. I can do work without relying on it. But both of these fall short. I must rely on His might *and then* do the work.

iv. It is not:

- I do everything and God does nothing.
- I do nothing and God does everything.
- I do all I can and God helps with what I can't.

Each of those approaches falls short. The key is for me to by faith rely on His **might** - and rely on it more and more - and then do the work.

v. In his great series of sermons on this text, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones listed many ways in which he believes Christians *wasted* their strength. It was as if they had received some of the available **might** of God, but it simply leaked away like water in a bucket full of holes. These are some of the things Lloyd-Jones thought sapped the strength of the Christian:

- Committing to too many spiritual works or things
- Too much conversation
- Arguments, debates, wrangling
- Laziness
- Too much time in the wrong company
- Too much foolish talk and joking
- Love of money and career
- A desire for respectability and image
- An unequal yoking with an unbeliever
- Ungodly entertainment
- A wrong attitude toward or doubting the Word of God

vi. "We have to walk on a knife-edge in these matters; you must not become extreme on side or the other. But you have to be watchful. And, of course, you can always tell by

examining yourself whether your strength is increasing or declining.” (Lloyd-Jones)

2. (Eph_6:11) The command for the whole armor of God.

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

a. **Put on the whole armor of God:** The **armor of God** will be explained for fully in the next passage; but the emphasis is on **the whole armor of God**. God gives the believer a full set of equipment, and He sends us out into battle with everything we need at our disposal.

i. This ancient Greek word for **armor** is used in only one other place in the New Testament. In Luk_11:21-22, Jesus speaks of the *strong man* who is *fully armed*, but is stripped of *all his armor* when a *stronger* one comes and defeats him. We know that Jesus disarmed all principalities and powers (Col_2:15).

ii. This armor is **of God** both in the sense that it is from Him, and in the sense that it *is His actual armor*. In the Old Testament, it is the LORD who wears the armor (Isa_59:17). He now shares that armor with us - no wonder we are *more than conquerors*! (Rom_8:37)

b. **That you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil:** We express the strength we have in God by standing **against the wiles of the devil**. Satan’s schemes against us come to nothing when we stand against them in the power of God.

i. Stott quoting Simpson: “The tactics of intimidation and insinuation alternate in Satan’s plan of campaign. He plays both the bully and the beguiler. Force and fraud form his chief offensive against the camp of the saints.”

3. (Eph_6:12) The fact of spiritual warfare.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

a. **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers:** Paul does not call the believer to *enter into* spiritual warfare. He simply announces it as a fact: **we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but** (we do wrestle) **against principalities** and so forth. You *are in* a spiritual battle. If you are ignorant or ignore that fact, you probably aren't winning the battle.

b. **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood:** The fact that our real battle is not against **flesh and blood** is lost on many Christians, who put all their efforts in that direction. Paul's idea here is much the same as in 2Co_10:3-4 : *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.*

i. Foulkes says a more literal translation is, *Not for us is the wrestling against flesh and blood.*

c. **Principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places:** Paul used a variety of terms to refer to our spiritual enemies. We should regard them as being on many different levels and of many different ranks, yet they all have one goal: to knock the Christian down from their place of standing.

i. Eph_6:11 tells us that all of our warfare is combating *the wiles of the devil* (Eph_6:11). At the end of the day it is completely irrelevant if the particular opponent we face is a principality, a power, or a ruler of the darkness of this age. Collectively, they are all members of **spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places**. They are all part of a spiritual army that is organized and established into ranks - and under the headship of Satan, the devil, who comes against us with his wiles.

ii. We learn more about these **principalities** and **powers** from other passages in the New Testament.

Rom_8:38 tells us that **principalities** cannot keep us from God's love. Therefore, there is a *limit* to their power.

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Eph_1:20-21 tells us that Jesus is enthroned in heaven, far above all **principalities** and **powers**.

Col_1:16 tells us that Jesus created **principalities** and **powers**. Col_2:10 tells us that Jesus is head over all principality and power. Therefore, Jesus is not the *opposite* of Satan or principalities.

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Eph_3:10-11 tells us that the church makes known the wisdom of God to **principalities** and **powers**.

1Co_15:24 tells us that **principalities** and **powers** have an end; one day their purpose will be fulfilled and God will no longer let them work. Therefore, God has a *purpose* in allowing their work.

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Col_2:15 tells us that Jesus disarmed **principalities** and **powers** at the cross. Therefore, *our victory is rooted in what Jesus did*, not in what we do. It isn't that there is no doing on our part - but our doing is the *appropriation* and *application* of what Jesus did.

iii. Some interpret the nature of **principalities** and **powers** in purely naturalistic terms. Markus Barth wrote, "We conclude that by principalities and powers Paul means the world of axioms and principles of politics and religion, of economics and society, of morals and biology, of history and culture." But this contradicts what Paul says about our battle *not* being against **flesh and blood**.

4. (Eph_6:13) The proper response to the fact of spiritual warfare.

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

a. **Therefore take up the whole armor of God:** Paul introduced the idea of **the whole armor of God** back in Eph_6:11. In the following passage he details the specific items related to the armor of God. In this verse, he simply states what the main purpose of spiritual warfare and the armor of God is.

b. **That you may be able:** Without the strength of God and the protection of spiritual armor, it is impossible to stand against the attacks of spiritual enemies.

c. **That you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand:** This describes what we use the strength of God and the armor of God.

i. Many Christians have a wrong idea about spiritual warfare. They picture the Christian army as assaulting the kingdom of hell, and on patrol against demons and spiritual enemies. Much of this is based on a misunderstanding of Mat_16:18 : *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*

ii. It's easy to see how a first reading of this passage gives the picture of the church as an assaulting army, bombarding the gates of Hell, and plundering Hell and conquering it. The problem is that this understanding is completely inconsistent with the rest of the Scriptures. Nowhere do we read of the church assaulting or conquering Hell in this way.

iii. Instead, we should understand what is meant by the phrase "*the gates of Hades.*" In the ancient world, the city council, judges, and city leadership gathered together at the gates of the city. It was the place where the city life was planned, organized, strategized. It's in this sense that Jesus speaks of *the gates of Hades*. He means that no satanic strategy, no plot from Hell will ultimately succeed against the church.

iv. Instead of picturing the army of the church seeking out and attacking some kind of demonic fortress, we are to have the idea that Jesus illustrated in His ministry. Jesus didn't patrol around, looking for demons to conquer.

That would almost be allowing demons to set the agenda for His ministry. Instead, Jesus knew what God the Father wanted Him to do, He set about doing it, and He dealt with satanic opposition when it arose. When satanic opposition raised itself, *Jesus stood against it and was not moved*.

v. So the idea is that God has given us a call, a mission, a course to fulfill. Satan will do his best to stop it. When he attacks and intimidates, we are to **stand**. It is plain that this is Paul's emphasis in Eph_6:11; Eph_6:13. We love an energetic church that advances the Kingdom of God so vigorously that it shakes the councils of hell, but we don't let principalities and powers set our agenda. We do the Lord's work and stand against every hint of spiritual opposition.

vi. God gives the Christian a glorious standing to maintain by faith and spiritual warfare:

- We stand in **grace** (Rom_5:2).
- We stand in the **gospel** (1Co_15:1).
- We stand in **courage** and **strength** (1Co_16:13).
- We stand in **faith** (2Co_1:24).
- We stand in Christian **liberty** (Gal_5:1).
- We stand in Christian **unity** (Php_1:27).
- We stand in the **Lord** (Php_4:1).
- We should stand **perfect** and **complete** in the will of God (Col_4:12).

vii. The same idea is repeated in 1 Peter 5 : *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.* (1Pe_5:8-9)

viii. All in all, there is a lot bound up in that little word, **stand**.

- It means that we are going to be attacked.

- It means that we must not be frightened.
- It means that we must not droop or slouch, being uncertain or half-hearted in the fight (no self-pity is allowed).
- It means that we are at our position and alert.
- It means that we do not give even a thought to retreat.

5. (Eph_6:14-15) The spiritual armor to *have*.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; a. **Stand therefore:** We can only **stand** when we are equipped with the armor God has given us in Jesus Christ. Each aspect of this symbolic armor answers to a specific dynamic within the Christian life that enables us to stand against spiritual attack.

i. Paul wrote this while in the custody of Roman soldiers. It was easy for him to look at the equipment of his guards and see how God has equipped the believer.

ii. The order in which the pieces of armor are described is the order in which the soldier would put them on.

b. **Having girded your waist with truth:** **Truth** is symbolically represented as a belt which both protects our abdomen and gathers up our garments so that we can fight effectively.

i. Strictly, the belt is not part of the armor, but before the armor can be put on, the garments underneath must be gathered together.

ii. "The soldier might be furnished with every other part of his equipment, and yet, wanting the girdle, would neither be fully accoutered nor securely armed. His *belt* . . . was no mere adornment of the soldier, but an essential part of his equipment . . . it was of especial use in keeping other parts in place, and in securing the proper soldierly attitude and freedom of movement." (Salmond)

iii. When a man sat down and was relaxed, he took off his belt. Putting on the belt prepares you for action, it frees your

movements, and it put him in a battle frame of mind. The same idea is communicated by Jesus in Luk_12:35-36.

iv. The belt of truth puts on the Biblical beliefs of the Christians as a whole - what other passages call *the faith*.

Many people believe that the church will never go forward until it takes off this belt of truth, but that is completely wrong. This is armor to *have* - it is a foundation you live upon all the time, your understanding of and confidence in the basic doctrines of the faith.

c. **Having put on the breastplate of righteousness:** **Righteousness** is represented as a **breastplate** which provides essential protection for the most vital organs. We can no sooner battle against spiritual enemies in our *own* righteousness than a soldier can effectively fight without his breastplate.

i. This is not our own earned righteousness, not a feeling of righteousness, but a righteousness received by faith in Jesus. It gives us a general sense of confidence, an awareness of our standing and position.

ii. "Thank God for experiences, but do not rely on them. You do not put on the 'breastplate of experiences', you put on the breastplate of 'righteousness.'" (Lloyd-Jones)

iii. We are sometimes tempted to say to the devil "Look at all I've done for the Lord." But that is shaky ground, though sometimes it feels good. It is shaky because the feeling and experiences and doing is so changeable. God's righteousness isn't. The breastplate of righteousness is your best defense against the sense of spiritual depression and gloom that comes against your gut.

d. **Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace:** The **preparation of the gospel** is represented as the protective shoes (or sandals) worn by Roman soldiers. No one can fight effectively or effectively go about their business without this equipment.

i. **Preparation** is a word meaning “a prepared foundation.” The gospel provides the footing for everything we do.

However powerful the rest of your body is, if you are wounded in your feet you are easy prey for the enemy.

ii. On the shoes: “Josephus described them as ‘shoes thickly studded with sharp nails’ . . . so as to ensure a good grip. the military successes both of Alexander the Great and of Julius Caesar were due in large measure to their armies’ being well shod and thus able to undertake long marches at incredible speed over rough terrain.” (Wood) iii. Paul has Isa_52:7 in mind when he refers to **having shod your feet**: *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”*

iv. The idea of **preparation** is really *readiness* - we must be mobile, flexible, ready with the truth. This is a place to *have* in the Christian life, to live in constant readiness and flexibility.

6. (Eph_6:16-18) The spiritual armor to *take*.

Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; a. **Above all**: This really has the idea of “in addition to the previous,” and it applies to each of the three pieces of armor that follow. It isn’t the idea, “this piece of armor is more important than any of the other.”

b. **Taking the shield of faith**: Eph_6:13-14 tells us of armor *to have*. Some of the armor we must wear all the time, and have as a standing foundation. Therefore *having* comes first. We must be rooted in belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the “combat boots” of the gospel i. Now we come to the armor *to take*. These aspects of the armor we take up from situation to situation, as the moment demands. Think about those “demanding moments” in spiritual warfare”

- A flood of depression or discouragement, feeling like a black cloud.
 - When a relatively insignificant thing gets blown way out of proportion.
 - An opportunity to speak with someone about what Jesus did for you.
 - Opposition against a sense that God wants you to do something, to follow through on something.
 - A sense of panic and helplessness.
- ii. In those critical moments, we need to

Take the shield of faith.

Take the helmet of salvation.

Take the sword of God's Word.

c. **Taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one:**

Faith is represented as a **shield**, protecting us from the **fiery darts of the wicked one**, those persistent efforts of demonic foes to weaken us through fear and unbelief.

i. The **shield** Paul describes is not the small round one, but the large, oblong shield that could protect the whole body. In ancient warfare, these **fiery darts** were launched in great number at the beginning of an attack. The idea was not only to injure the enemy, but to shoot at him at all sides with a massive number of darts, and thus confuse and panic the enemy.

ii. "Even when such a missile was caught by the shield and did not penetrate to the body, says Livy, it caused panic, because it was thrown when well alight and its motion

through the air made it blaze most fiercely, so that the soldier was tempted to get rid of his burning shield and expose himself to the enemy's spear-thrusts. But the *shield of faith* not only catches the incendiary devices by extinguishes them." (Bruce)

iii. Thoughts, feelings, imaginations, fears, lies - all of these can be hurled at us by Satan as **fiery darts**. **Faith** turns them back.

d. **And take the helmet of salvation:** In the ancient world, this was a leather cap studded with metal for extra strength.

Often some kind of plume or decoration was added, perhaps to identify the soldier to his regiment. **Salvation** is pictured as this kind of **helmet**, protecting essential material. A soldier would be foolish to go into battle without his **helmet**.

i. 1Th_5:8 speaks of the helmet of salvation in connection to *the hope of salvation*. The helmet of salvation protects us against discouragement, against the desire to give up, giving us hope not only in knowing that we *are* saved, but that we *will be* saved. It is the assurance that God will triumph.

ii. One of Satan's most effective weapons against us is *discouragement*. When we are properly equipped with the helmet of salvation, it's hard to stay discouraged.

e. **The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:** The idea is that the *Spirit provides a sword* for you, and that *sword is the word of God*. To effectively use the Sword of the Spirit, we can't regard the Bible as book of magic charms or tie one around our neck the way that garlic is said to drive away vampires.

i. To effectively use the sword, we must regard it **as the word of God - which is the word of God**. If we are not confident in the inspiration of Scripture, that the sword really came from the Spirit, then we will not use it effectively at all.

ii. But we must also take the sword of the Spirit in the sense of depending that He helps us to use it. Not only did the Spirit *give* us the Scriptures, but also He makes them alive to us, and equips us with the right thrust of the sword at the right time.

iii. Think of a soldier or a gladiator in training, practicing sword thrusts and moves and positions. Now, he must practice them ahead of time, and if he is a superior fighter, and has a great fighting instinct, at the time of battle he will instantly recall which thrust, which position suits the precise moment. He will never be able to use the thrust in the fight if he has not first practiced it, but he still needs to make the move at the moment.

iv. Therefore, effectively using the sword takes practice. The great example of this was Jesus combating the temptation of Satan in the wilderness. Luther was another example of this, when he came to any understanding of Psa_31:1 : *deliver me in Your righteousness*. This helped him understand the real meaning of *the just will live by faith*.

7. (Eph_6:18-20) How to use spiritual strength and the armor of God.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints; and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

a. **Praying always with all prayer:** The idea is *all kinds of prayer* or *prayer upon prayer*. We should use every kind of prayer we can think of. Group prayer, individual prayer, silent prayer, shouting prayer, walking prayer, kneeling prayer, eloquent prayer, groaning prayer, constant prayer, fervent prayer - *just pray*.

i. We can say that it is through prayer that spiritual strength and the armor of God go to work. In theory, the prayerless

Christian can be strong and wearing all the armor - but actually goes into battle through prayer.

ii. Often we just don't pray because we are simply overconfident in our own abilities. Winston Churchill said to Britain in the early days of World War II: "I must drop one word of caution, for next to cowardice and treachery, overconfidence leading to neglect and slothfulness, is the worst of wartime crimes."

b. **For all the saints:** We can battle spiritually not only on our own behalf, but also on the behalf of others. The soldier isn't only concerned for his or her own safety. They feel an instinct to protect and battle on behalf of *others*.

c. **And for me, that utterance may be given to me:** After bringing up the idea that spiritual warfare can be waged on behalf of others, Paul asks his readers to pray for him.

d. **To boldly make known the mystery of the gospel:** Paul could have asked prayer for many things, but he wanted them to pray for this. He probably has in mind his upcoming defense before Caesar.

i. We *could* imagine Paul asking for many things, such as relief from his imprisonment or other comforts. But his heart and mind are fixed on his responsibility as an **ambassador** of the gospel.

e. **That utterance may be given to me:** The idea behind **utterance** is clear speaking. Added to **boldly**, Paul asks for prayer that he might proclaim the gospel both *clearly* and with a *fearless* power. It is easy to neglect one or the other.

f. **I am an ambassador in chains:** Of course, the ancient Greek word for **chains** meant a prisoner's shackles. But it could also be used for the gold adornment worn around the neck and wrists of the wealthy and powerful. On special occasions, ambassadors wore such chains to show the riches, power, and dignity of the government they represented. Paul considers his prisoner's chains to actually

be the glorious adornment of an **ambassador** of Jesus Christ.

C. Conclusion to the letter.

1. (Eph_6:21-22) The sending of Tychicus.

But that you also may know my affairs *and* how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and *that* he may comfort your hearts.

a. **Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister:**

Tychicus was an associate of Paul's mentioned in other letters (Act_20:4, Col_4:7, 2Ti_4:12, Tit_3:12). He seems to have been often used by Paul as a messenger (**that you may know our affairs**).

b. **That he may comfort your hearts:** Paul wanted Tychicus to comfort the Ephesians (and everyone else who read the letter) about Paul's condition during his imprisonment in Rome.

2. (Eph_6:23-24) Final words.

Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace *be* with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

a. **Peace to the brethren . . . Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus:** Paul concludes the letter as he began it, with reference to **grace** and **peace**, two essential cornerstones for the Christian life.

b. **All those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity:** **In sincerity** is literally "in uncorruptness." The idea may well be *with an undying love*. Our love for the Lord should be undying.

c. **Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity:** Paul ends by pronouncing a blessing - his way of helping the Ephesians to walk in *every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*. (Eph_1:3) (Eph 6:2) " **Honor your father and mother,** "3 which is the first commandment accompanied by a promise, namely, (Eph

6:3) " ***that it may go 4 well with you and that you will live 5 a long time on the earth.*** "6

(Eph 6:4) Fathers,7 do not provoke your children to anger,8 but raise them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

(Eph 6:5) Slaves,9 obey your human masters10 with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart as to Christ,

(Eph 6:6) not like those who do their work only when someone is watching11 — as people-pleasers — but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from the heart.12

(Eph 6:7) Obey13 with enthusiasm, as though serving the Lord14 and not people,

(Eph 6:8) because you know that each person, whether slave or free, if he does something good, this15 will be rewarded by the Lord.

(Eph 6:9) Masters,16 treat your slaves17 the same way,18 giving up the use of threats,19 because you know that both you and they have the same master in heaven,20 and there is no favoritism with him.

(Eph 6:10) ***Exhortations for Spiritual Warfare***

Finally, be strengthened in the Lord and in the strength of his power.

(Eph 6:11) Clothe yourselves with the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes21 of the devil.

(Eph 6:12) For our struggle22 is not against flesh and blood,23 but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness,24 against the spiritual forces25 of evil in the heavens.26

(Eph 6:13) For this reason, take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand your ground27 on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand.

(Eph 6:14) Stand firm therefore, by fastening28 the belt of truth around your waist,29 by putting on the breastplate of

righteousness, (Eph 6:15) by fitting your³⁰ feet with the preparation that comes from the good news³¹ of peace,³² (Eph 6:16) and in all of this,³³ by taking up the shield³⁴ of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

(Eph 6:17) And take *the helmet of salvation* ³⁵ and the sword³⁶ of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

(Eph 6:18) With every prayer and petition, pray³⁷ at all times in the Spirit, and to this end³⁸ be alert, with all perseverance and requests for all the saints.

(Eph 6:19) Pray³⁹ for me also, that I may be given the message when I begin to speak⁴⁰ — that I may confidently make known⁴¹ the mystery of the gospel, (Eph 6:20) for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may be able to speak boldly as I ought to speak.

(Eph 6:21) ***Farewell Comments***

Tychicus, my⁴² dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will make everything known to you, so that you too may know about my circumstances,⁴³ how I am doing.

(Eph 6:22) I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know our circumstances⁴⁴ and that he may encourage your hearts.

(Eph 6:23) Peace to the brothers and sisters,⁴⁵ and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Eph 6:24) Grace be⁴⁶ with all of those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.⁴⁷